

JESUS  
AS THEY REMEMBERED HIM

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By  
CHESTER WARREN QUIMBY

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To  
NELLIE  
*Whose critical literary acumen  
made this book possible*  
WITH  
GRATITUDE

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## INTRODUCTION

IT IS NOT FULLNESS OF MATERIAL THAT MAKES ADEQUATE biographical information possible. It is rather the possession of a few indispensable principles. Concerning any character these are his fixed heredity, immediate environment, physical characteristics, key experiences, mental qualities, central emotions, driving motives, distinctive qualities, and major achievements. If the available sources are sufficient to give authentic knowledge on these items, then, however fragmentary they may be, they can yet afford the necessary information for a competent biography.

This is to say, if we can know the surroundings amid which the person grew; if we can judge the general nature of his physical constitution, whether he was lean and sharp, or broad and beefy; if we can tell what misfortunes he suffered, or what blessings and honors he enjoyed; if we can perceive how his mind worked and the central ideas it harbored; if we can discover how he felt about life and the emotions which excited him; if we can fathom the motives which activated him and why; if we can measure the combination of qualities which mark him off from his fellows; if we can ascertain what he accomplished for good or ill; then, although much interesting and desirable detail about him may be missing, we can know him, and know him truly.



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But we must have all these points. Omit any one, as the body, motives, or distinctive qualities, and the picture by that much is incomplete. But if we possess all these points, whatever may otherwise be confused, disputed, or lost, the final picture will be sufficient. This book is an attempt carefully and thoroughly to portray each of these essentials regarding Jesus of Nazareth.

In addition to these basic items every person of significance has certain matters peculiar to himself that call for special discussion. Concerning Jesus they are: Why was the best man who ever lived so outrageously hated? Why was this humble carpenter elevated to deity? What was the inspired message he proclaimed? Therefore, to any study of Jesus must be added his surprising unpopularity, his unique perfection, and his Gospel.

It is these indispensable principles, together with these three special items, that form the structure of this book. Thus the chapter subjects of this book represent no whim of the writer. Others on "His Courtesy," "His Love of Beauty," or like topics, could not be substituted for them. They are basic to all biographical knowledge. They unfold the profound principles upon which all biographies and biographical portraits must be written.

This book could not have been written apart from the methods and findings of present-day New Testament scholarship. The writer is familiar with the basic facts regarding the gospel origins—that their material about Jesus is fragmentary; that they are editorial growths, not straight-off compositions; that they are interdependent;

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that their editors arranged and adapted their materials freely and variously; that they are not mere recountings of Jesus' life, but also interpretations of it, written not merely to retell the story of Jesus, but to explain its meaning for the salvation of men. With these *findings* this author is in full accord. It is rather from the *conclusion* based on these findings—that we can never know “Jesus as they remembered him,” but only “Jesus as they interpreted him”—that this writer profoundly dissents. That a full, definitive biography in the modern manner is impossible, is plain. But even accepting the findings of modern gospel studies, the outline facts for a sufficient life of Jesus are still recoverable.

How *much* we really know of Jesus of Nazareth! We know that Jesus was an early, first century Jew of Galilean Nazareth, one of a large family, and an artisan. “Early first century” fixes his era when Rome ruled the world. “Jew” classifies his race as Semitic and his religion as Hebraic. “Galilean Nazareth” locates his environment. “One of a large family” reveals his domestic situation. “Artisan” fixes him in middle class circumstances.

We know further that the preaching of John the Baptist aroused him to his mission; that he became enormously popular, chose a coterie of disciples, went about doing good, taught the people, lost his popular following, fell afoul the religious leaders, and was martyred; and that his disciples proclaimed that he had risen to life and ruled in spiritual power. We know, further, that he taught the



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highest conception of God the mind can conceive, the Infinite Father; the noblest view of man imaginable, sons of the Most High; and the loftiest principle life can practice, unquenchable, impartial love.

Thus we know his race, religion, province, village, home, environment, heritage, relatives, friends, followers, occupation, circumstances, social standing, physical characteristics, mental acumen, motives, emotions, crucial experiences, mission, gospel message, difficulties, failure, successes, unselfish living, high religion, distinctive qualities, matchless character, tragic martyrdom, lasting achievements, and final triumph.

Hence the feasibility of writing, out of our modern knowledge, new and more accurate lives of Jesus, instead of diminishing, increases. Enough is here, and ample, for a sufficient life of Jesus as they remembered him.

## CHAPTER ONE

# HIS ENVIRONMENT

*"He dwelt among us"*

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ANY PICTURE OF JESUS' ENVIRONMENT IS UNATTRACTIVE. Look at it as we will, it is dark and forbidding. Of course life then as now overflowed with beauty. It was radiant with the bright sparkle of spring flowers and the long sunshine of summer. The air was cheery with children's laughter, wedding songs, and faces bright with smiles. There was "music and dancing" where men "began to be merry." Yet to us the picture is gray and bitter. Had we to live there, we would have found life hard and galling.

Jesus' world was a dirty, unsanitary world. During the long months from May to October no drop of water fell. The land burned brown as toast. Water became scarce. It could be had only from wells, stale cisterns, and distant springs. The houses, with floors and roofs of beaten earth, increased the difficulties of cleanliness. The remarkable thing was not that people were dirty, but that faces, raiment, and houses were kept relatively clean.



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As always, the heat bred vermin. Flies, fleas, gnats, bugs, and lice swarmed everywhere. There was no way to keep them out. Screens were unknown and would have been useless. Many of the meanest insects were tiny enough to sift through any ordinary mesh. They got into the food and the sleeping babies' eyes; they swarmed over refuse and sores. They crawled up walls and over animals. They buried themselves in clothing and bedding. Everywhere they spread disease. Even the ancient Palestinians abhorred them. Some malignant force, they thought, had spewed this plague over the earth. All this swarming multitude was under the control of the powerful and malignant spirit Beelzebub, Lord of Flies.<sup>1</sup>

Sanitation was practiced only in its most elemental form of washings and exposure to sunlight and destruction by fire. Sheep with their dirty wool and malodorous goats with their unclean hair shared the living quarters of the family. Often the chickens and the family ass or ox were added to the household occupants. Sanitary conveniences, public or private, were nonexistent; all outdoors was a public toilet. Children were sent to the fields and the watering troughs of beasts to collect dung. With their hands they mixed it with chopped straw; they patted it into cakes and set it along the housetops to dry. Later mother would use it to heat the mud oven for

<sup>1</sup>The commentaries give two forms of the word, Beel-zebul and Beel-zebub—usually translated "Lord of Flies," sometimes "Lord of the House." *The Biblical Archeologist*, II (1939), 5, gives the meaning as "Lord of the Earth." In any case, the gospel word denotes the prince or commander of the whole demonic powers.

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baking. Women, when drawing water from a pool, stepped directly in with dusty feet, stooped and filled their jars. Hence not even the drinking water was sanitary.

One ought, then, to be neither surprised nor shocked to find Jesus employing unsanitary practices in his healing. Upon the blind man's lids he smeared a salve mixed of his own saliva and the unclean dirt of the ground. Off to the pool of Siloam, where the Jerusalem women drew their drinking water, he sent the man to wash. In Jesus' day it was this or nothing.

An unsanitary world means a diseased world. There were then no hospitals, asylums, or sanatoria. In the gospels, the sick are out upon the streets, freely spreading their maladies among both themselves and the healthy. Only in the case of leprosy was there anything like a quasi-quarantine in force. One sees Lazarus in the parable, full of festering sores, sitting so near the banquet table that he can in his feebleness catch the scraps tossed from the rich man's table. A sight full of pity, but a menace to public health and a threat to the lives of the banqueters. At the pool of Bethesda the sick, the lame, the sore-covered, the diseased commingled. At the troubling of the waters, all together they scrambled in, hoping to be cured, but in reality washing their diseases upon each other.

The simplest facts about diseases were unknown. Many complaints were thought to be direct punishments



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from God: "Who sinned, this man or his parents that he should be born blind?" Demons were believed to be another common cause for physical and mental maladies. It was a demon that had seized possession of the epileptic boy and contorted him in convulsions. "Ofttimes it hath cast him both into the fire and into the waters to destroy him." The Gerasene demoniac, apparently suffering from some serious mental derangement, was believed by himself and others to be possessed, not by one demon merely, but by many. "My name is legion." A battalion of wicked spirits was supposed to have invaded him. The unfortunate woman, "bound for eighteen years," perhaps had some spinal trouble or mental complex so she could not straighten herself up. Her case was popularly diagnosed as one "whom Satan hath bound." The Syro-phoenician's daughter lay prostrated with an unknown complaint. But then experts said she "had an unclean spirit."

With such views of disease there went two chief ways of curing the victim. One was to exorcise the demon with magic incantations. For a plague of boils one could go to the doctor and secure some such magic formula to repeat as this: "Baz, Bazujah, Mas, Masiya, Kas, Kasiyah, Sharlai and Amarlai—Ye angels that come from the land of Sodom to heal these painful boils. Let the color not become more red, let it not further spread, let its seed be absorbed in the belly. As the mule does not propagate itself so let not this evil propagate itself in my body!"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Edersheim: *The Life and Times of Jesus*, pp. 774, 775.

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That would cure the boils! Or if one had a bad cold, it could be cured with a brew made by pouring "a quart of milk of a white goat over three cabbage stalks, keeping the pot boiling and stirring with a piece of Marnehon-wood." But should this concoction fail, a more powerful medicine could be made from "the excrement of a white dog mixed with balsam."<sup>3</sup>

Of course such cures never healed, and the sufferers took to the streets. They sat along the city walls in the shade or in the sun; they squatted by the temple gate; they lingered along the chief thoroughfares; they haunted the watering places. Wherever men congregated, these piteous unfortunates gathered to beg. Blind men tapped along, leading other blind. Lepers called their mournful, "Unclean, unclean!" and held out their stumpy palms for coins. The lame hobbled along, and even the insane roamed about, screaming and babbling.

"As Jesus passed by," he saw them—out in the open, with no comfort, no care, no cure, longing, hoping, waiting for One who should be "moved with compassion."

It was a world of grinding toil. Machinery was unknown. Labor-saving devices had not been invented. Work, whether at the loom, in the shop, or in the field, was slow, exhausting hand toil. One reads of "heaviness," "weariness," "burdens."

One can still see it, even in the modern Orient. Look at that porter bowing along the dock. On his back are

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



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strapped a full-sized trunk and five suitcases, while in his hands he lugs two large grips. Watch this other man toiling up the steep main street of Tiberius. It is in the "heat of the day." The wind is blowing off the eastern desert like the blast of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. The thermometer stands at 108° in the shade. In the boiling sun the man toils up the hill. On his back are tied twelve modern ladder-back, cane-seat chairs. Behold another burden bearer bending his way along David street, the main street of Jerusalem. To his back is strapped a pile of thirty-two boxes, each a little larger and heavier than an orange crate.

See these women coming "all the way hither to draw" water from the pool of Siloam. Along the narrow Jerusalem streets they come, out of the city gate and down the steep sides of Mount Zion. At its foot they descend forty wet, slippery steps and wade into the pool. Today their water jars are empty five-gallon gasoline tins. Each fills her can to the brim and balancing that forty-two pounds on her head climbs the steep ascent to the city. Now note this woman. She fills two tins. The first she balances on her head. The second a friend lifts and places atop the first. Up the wet slippery steps she comes, and on up the slopes of Mount Zion she goes, bearing on her head a full eighty pounds.

Such burden bearing begins in childhood. Let us stand here by the Virgin's Fountain in Nazareth, at the very heart of Jesus' environment. Here came Mary daily for the family water. Here still come women and girls,

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as of old. Watch this dark-eyed lass not yet in her teens. She fills her water jar to the brim. But she is not able to lift it. She turns herself about, straightens up, and upon her head a neighbor woman places that burden she could not raise. Up the street she goes, heavy laden. At home her mother will set down for her the jar that she could not pick up, but whose weight she has toted across the town. Here comes a boy panting along a Jerusalem street, leaning under the weight of his load. His face is strained, his eyes bulge and burn with exhaustion. He stops at his destination, turns about, and a man lifts from him the heavy weight with which another, loading him like a pack animal, has bowed him down.

This is the modern Holy Land, where presumably some of the kinder, easier ways of modern civilization are in force. If it is so now, under how much heavier burdens must the people of Galilee and Judea have groaned in Jesus' day?

All work in Jesus' day was disastrously hard. Fishermen stood on the shore throwing their huge, weighted, twenty-foot casting nets into the water. Throw and haul, throw and haul the water-soaked strings in the hopes of snaring a few fish. Or they rowed out, two boats together, circling around with a huge seine net. Repeatedly they tugged it in, often finding they had enclosed nothing. One could "toil all night and take nothing." But that never ended the job. In the morning the nets had to be dragged ashore, spread out to dry, and mended. Carpenters and smiths sat all day in their shops, sawing,



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beating, pounding. Their tools were few. For a vise they gripped their work between their feet. Small boys helped shape up the cruder parts of the work ready for finishing. There were no benches, no fine machined tools. It was all slow manual labor.

So also was it with the farmer. He sowed, grubbed, weeded, and reaped by hand. It was the old aching day of the sickle and flail. In the house, the women found it no easier. "Two women sitting at the mill" pulled the upper stone round and round, pouring in the grain and grinding out the flour to the swaying of aching backs and tired arms.

Amid this toiling, sweating, groaning labor, Jesus grew. As a small boy he began his work beside the carpenter Joseph. In later years he bore the full brunt of the long day's toil. Day after day he sat with the wood between his feet. His neighbors remembered him so. "Is not this the carpenter?" they asked.

Such a burdened world is an exhausted world. Life quickly burns out. Hence, it was a world of early old age. Men became gaunt and wrinkled by middle life. Beautiful girls became dull, seamed, and old at thirty. Dead eyes, bent backs, and hopeless faces cried aloud for Someone who could promise, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

It was a world of stark poverty. Men do not become dumb driven cattle unless compelled by hunger and nakedness. The poor pervade the gospels. A poor widow

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suffered the loss of her only means of support—her only son. Another's two mites were all her living. Jesus' parables were full of such destitute. Lazarus, being ill, sat and begged. A housewife lost a single common coin and in a great to-do swept until she found it. Garments were patched. Men stood all day in the marketplace waiting for work, knowing the standard pay was but a single coin worth to us about twenty-five cents. Though prices were lower then, a twenty-five-cent wage could afford no comforts.

The ordinary man lived in a stone and mud hut. Often it had but one medium-sized room. Occasionally it had two—"an inner chamber," or on the roof "an upper room." One door and one unglazed window sufficed for light and air. The floor was the ground. There was a little cheap pottery, some worn quilts, and a storage chest. A small oven and grindstone completed the family equipment. Such was the home of Jesus and of his neighbors. There were no comforts, no conveniences, no pictures, no books, few clothes, too little food. What more could one have for "a penny a day?"

The like of this can be seen all over Palestine even to-day. Old tire treads are not junked over there. Useless for further vehicular purposes, they are cut up and worn out again as sandals. Gasoline tins are hammered into pots, pans, and pails. Old clothing goes to no ragpicker. Every cast-off, threadbare coat, vest, and shirt is seized and worn out. As late as 1932 in Jerusalem one could climb into a large five-passenger Buick, wait for it to fill, then



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taxi to Bethlehem. One's share to the driver for the whole six miles was eight cents. How did people live in comfort on such incomes? They do not now; they did not then when Jesus walked in Galilee.

Jesus' world was always hungry. "They ate and *were filled.*" Those italicized words more than emphasize the abundant multiplication of the loaves and fishes. They underline the tragedy that to be filled was very rare, and they shout aloud that for once these hungry folk had all they could eat. The modern Hindus in their half-starved living speak of a bit of wage as "half a stomach." For once these Galileans received a "whole stomach." "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" Yes, but who wants to bother with preparing a meal of sparrows? The poor, for not often do they expect a whole stomach. They hope for only enough to allay the gnawing pangs of hunger sufficiently to let them sleep.

So through the gospels march the poor, the hungry, the ragged and shivering, waiting for Someone who shall bring "glad tidings to the poor."

It was a crowded world. The world's poor are always crowded. In Jesus' day, Galilee teemed with villages. Its little territory boasted millions of inhabitants. The narrow streets were hardly ten feet wide. Houses had neither front yard nor back yard, front porch nor back porch. The little flat roof served as yard, veranda, and summer sleeping porch. In the winter the whole family, with any sheep, goats, and fowl, were herded into the one



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main room. One sees Joseph, Mary, and at least seven children sleeping together along the raised floor. One gets an echo of this experience in Jesus' parable of the friend at midnight. The man of the house calls out through the dark to the noisy knocker, "My children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee." To do so would have meant waking the whole family.

The tragedy of such crowding is that it means no peace or privacy. In case of heated misunderstanding, one cannot slam the door and stamp off into the den until things have cooled down. If one is sick, there is no possibility of finding quiet. At best, one can but shoo the offender outdoors, or flee oneself to the streets. It is no wonder that Jesus often sought privacy and quiet outdoors. "A great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a deserted place."

It was a noisy world. We would expect it to have been a quiet world. No factory whistles shrieked over the towns, no railroad engines screamed up the valleys, no trucks roared over the highways, no automobiles honked before the gate, no striking clocks shattered the wee small hours, and no church bells woke the Sabbath morning. Yet Jesus grew up in a world of noise.

The clamor began at dawn. In the early light yelling drivers beat their lazy donkeys into action. These beasts kept up a constant, raucous braying which blasted the possibility of further sleep. Sheep and goats bleated through the town on their way to pasture.

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Soon vendors began to shout their wares, and added to the hubbub by rhythmically rattling their brass utensils. Along their streets, carpenters and smiths beat out a furious din, increasing the clangor of their tools if a chance customer strolled by their stalls. All day long in the bazaars bargainers haggled noisily over an infinitesimal disagreement in price of water jar or cut of mutton. Children at their games shouted in the open market squares. Friends about to part upon no distant journey nevertheless fell wailing on each other's necks. Occasional funeral processions marched by, their professional hired mourners shrieking mechanical lamentations. All day long clamor and confusion reigned.

After dark, with children quiet and bazaars silenced, new noises began. On rooftops the one-stringed rababa commenced to twang, accompanied by the sharp reed flute, the exciting beat of the tubli, and the monotonous nasal minor of Oriental song. Wild dogs snarled in the streets or bayed the moon. Sometimes a late wedding, lit by flaming torches, aroused the drowsy midnight with music, dancing, and the harsh shouts of revelers. Soon after midnight the cock, shut up in the house with the sleeping family, began his high salutes to the yet distant dawn.

In the midst of such a noisy environment Jesus grew, lived, and worked. When he needed quiet there was but one way to get it. "He rose a great while before day and went out to a deserted place."



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It was a slow, leisurely world. To the Occidental, the Oriental seems incredibly lazy. "You cannot hustle the East," has become a proverb.

The fastest thing then was a horse. While a horse may canter swiftly for a space, it soon drops to a trot and slows quickly to a walk. Moreover, horses were not the possession of common men. They were too costly and consumed too much fodder. Horses belonged to kings and occasionally to men of wealth. They were used for military and postal service. For the daily work the slow-moving ass, ox, and pack camel set the creeping pace. At two and three miles an hour they crawled along. Speed was impossible.

Our modern Westerner's reason for speed did not exist. There were no clocks ticking off the flying minutes, with their "hurry, hurry, hurry." No whistles blew their imperious demand, "Begin work now." No railroad timetable warned, "Be on time or be left behind." No church bell rang out, "It is time to begin the opening hymn." The Oriental's clocks were only the slow-moving sun and the sedate moon. His only seasons were the hot months of the parching sun, when nature ordered, "Sit down"; and the damp, chilling months of rain, when nature commanded, "Stay in and keep warm." The environment of Jesus followed the lazy pace of the sun and moon and the creeping step of the seasons.

That is why any word about haste in the gospels is remarkable. Principal parts of the word "run" are rare. For men did not run. Why should they? There was



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more time tomorrow. If it was hot, it was dangerous to run. To go flying along with robes flapping out behind made of one a foolish spectacle. Often it was risky. Palestine is all uphill and down, and everywhere cluttered with stones. To run under such conditions was foolish. A man might "dash his foot against a stone."

In the gospels, then, if one hurries, the matter is important. Caiaphas' haste to have Jesus condemned before the Passover is a much weightier comment on the high priest's character and the justice of the trial than volumes of legal learning on the judicial technicalities of the procedure. His haste is his severest condemnation. "Peter and the other disciple went toward the tomb. And they ran both together, and the other disciple outran Peter." This is a vivid revelation of the eagerness, the excitement, and the surprise of these disciples.

"There ran one to him and kneeled to him." One can see it still: the rich young ruler running among the stones, clothes flying, cheeks glowing, arms swinging, eyes excited, and chest heaving, devoid of all dignity and restraint. His haste was the measure of his eagerness. In the parable of the prodigal son the father's pent-up affection for his wandering boy is revealed in the quick phrase, "He ran." One can see the old man, after glimpsing his son "while he was yet afar off," throwing all propriety, convention, and dignity to the winds as he set off on a run down the road. It is this haste that most exposes his love.

Only in crises did men put on speed. The man who

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pleaded with Jesus, "Suffer me first to go bury my father," was probably most severely shocked to receive the quick, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead." Why the hurry? There was always tomorrow. His companion who requested, "First suffer me to bid farewell," was doubtless equally surprised. Would there never be another day? Probably Jairus was not half so irked at Jesus' delaying over the woman who touched the hem of his garment as we usually suppose. Such leisured unconcern was the way of the Orient. That agonized cry of the nobleman in John's story, "Come down ere my child die!" with its urgent demand to hurry, is a double revelation of the seriousness of the case. For Orientals rarely hurry.

Business went on in the same easy-going manner. For with Jesus' people, business was never merely making a trade. It was a social affair requiring time. One not only bought and sold; one visited. The bargaining would, if the transaction involved even a moderate sum, be suspended when scarcely half completed, and the social amenities would begin. These observed, bargaining would be resumed. Buying and selling was as much a matching of wits as a trading of goods. Who could be so hasty and foolish as to lay down a coin and take up the wares? What a miserable way to trade, when wits could be sharpened and social pleasantries enjoyed! There was always time to delight in life and always tomorrow to make more money.

Probably no injunction fell on the disciples' ears with



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more surprise than, "Salute no man by the way." What! Had time ceased in its abundance? Must one go breathless from place to place? Could one never stop to gather news by the wayside, or argue the state of public affairs with those one met? What had happened that nothing could longer wait?

It is probably this slow pace of the East that explains at least in part the unhurried manner of Jesus. Always busy, but always at leisure. Thronged to the extent that "he could not so much as eat," he was sometimes busier than the modern business executive who takes his lunch off a tray on his desk corner. Yet Jesus was never in a breathless haste. Even during the last week, when all was tumult and rush, he moved with his slow, accustomed calm. It had been bred into him by his environment and vouchsafed to him by his faith in his unhurried, unworried Father. It gives new meaning to his words, at once so swiftly modern and Western and so leisurely Eastern and Oriental, "My time is not always, but your time is always."

It was a superstitious world. But let none sneer at honest superstition. In Jesus' day, with scientific knowledge impossible, it was inevitable. When one has but one's bare hands, two naked eyes, and a crude shovel, pail, and knife to investigate the heavens above, the earth beneath, the waters under the earth and every living creature that dwelleth therein, superstition is inevitable. For superstition is the unscientific attempt to explain natural phe-



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nomena, and to cope with the inevitable misfortunes which ignorance brings.

In Jesus' day the accepted explanation of evil was demons. Everyone thought the universe was filled with malicious hobgoblins, poised to swoop down upon the unsuspecting. The demons were socially inclined, living and moving in groups. They formed an invisible kingdom under the great king of demons, Satan. They haunted preferred places, such as certain trees, hills, rocks, animals, and persons. One or more could seize a person at will, working in him havoc, and then as suddenly leave him. They could cause all manner of physical complaints, mental aberrations, and moral perversions. Being invisible, and vastly abroad in the universe, they became possessed of remarkable information which they could turn to their sinister purposes. There was, as we have seen, the infirm woman "whom Satan had bound," and the Gerasene demoniac who was inhabited by a "legion" of evil spirits. It was these supposed demons, people believed, that initiated life's disasters. "And he was casting out a demon" from a man "that was dumb. And . . . when the demon was gone out, the dumb man spake." No physical disability, so far as they knew was involved. Rather a demon had tied his tongue.

Elaborate defenses were built against these hostile forces. People learned elaborate abracadabras and wore all sorts of trinkets as charms. Thus they hoped to gain some small measure of safety and peace. Yet, be careful as one

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could, no defense was sure. Demons were always breaking through and spreading their ruin among men.

We read these gospel stories of the demonized with half a smile. Our explanations would be different. Epilepsy, paralysis, insanity, complexes would be our terms. But we shall never understand the environment of Jesus until we can feel in ourselves a little of the terrors of demon belief. In Jesus' day this belief was real. Demons really existed! They infested persons, animals, things, and places, causing all kinds of horrors. One sees it in Jesus' awful parable of the haunted house. The demon-possessed man is rid of one demon only to fall victim of sevenfold more and worse evil spirits. All the world was haunted. One never knew when one might become a victim.

Among modern Palestinians, the ancient demon belief is still alive and potent. Everywhere one sees the protective charms of the evil eye and the blue bead. They are wound about the camels' necks, braided into the donkeys' manes, tied about the babies' wrists, sewed upon women's garments, strung around men's necks, encircled about radiator caps, and fastened to steering wheels. Ask a peasant what makes an automobile go, and he will reply in terms of the Arabian Nights, the "Jinn." The Jinn, he says, lives in the car. He is savagely addicted to gasoline. Feed him gasoline and he is so delighted that he will go anywhere, up hill and down valley, under the furnace sun. But deny him gasoline and neither coaxing nor threats can budge him.



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Or let there come a great heat over the land. Let the latter rains fail, with water running short until "two or three cities wander into one city seeking water," and what will the half-nomadic peoples of the Negeb do? It is the heat-demon that is burning up their land. Heat is fought with heat. They will search far and wide for every scrap of fuel in their barren, parched countryside. By lighting a huge fire they seek to make the heat seven times hotter. Make it so torrid that even the heat demon cannot endure its searing blast and will flee the place forever.

This belief in demons is not confined to the illiterate peasant and the bookless nomads. It is not solely the superstition of Arab Mohammedans. It is as firmly rooted in educated native Christians as in the most ignorant worshipers of Allah. Ask this orthodox Christian taxi driver, a literate, linguistic, informed guide, for the string of blue beads that guards his steering wheel. Will he sell it? No indeed. Offer him twice the value, five times, ten times the cost, will he part with it? Never! Even though he could purchase a new string before his next trip, who knows what calamity and death might not come? The car is now safe; leave it so!

This is real belief in demons. If it is so in this more enlightened era, with what sharper anxieties it must have filled the world of Jesus. That ancient, fear-ridden world waited for Someone who could master the demons and drive them out; Someone who could look that haunted world in the face and say with assurance, "Nothing shall in any wise hurt you."



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It was a cruel world. It still is. But we, with a touch of shame, try to cushion our brutalities. Not so in the ancient Orient. Like its diseases, its cruelties continued without pity and without care. There are cruelties in the gospels aplenty. The brave John the Baptist is beheaded during a birthday dance, for the grave offense of upholding elemental decency. Pilate, the Roman governor, once slew certain Galileans at the temple altar. By pinching economy those devout pilgrims had saved enough to make the difficult journey to Jerusalem. They had purchased their offerings for the sacrifice. In hopeful devotion they stood before the priests. The supreme act of their religion was about to be consummated. But Pilate had wind of a rumor. These Galileans were patriots involved in an uprising, or plotting his own overthrow during the feast. He acted quickly, with neither arrest nor trial. A sudden tramp of soldiers; the altar was surrounded; the worshipers were trapped unaware. A flash of swords, a few screams, and the blood of the worshipers mingled with the blood of the sacrifices as their dying bodies fell beside the carcasses of their offerings.

This same cruelty peeps out in the parables and words of the kindly Jesus. He speaks of slavery, where a man had few rights and fewer hopes. He describes the beating of servants and the robbing of tenants. He opposed a tough callousness to illness that apathetically watched the sick suffering unrelieved through the long Sabbath, refusing all care lest the day be "broken." Jewish execution was by stoning, and Roman death sentences were

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carried out by public crucifixion. Demoniacs were driven out of towns and away from human society. Upon whom might not the demon leap next? The Gerasene demoniac was forced to dwell in the distant cemetery, an unclean place forbidden to all who expected to worship without the long ablutions of ceremonial washings. His loud roarings rang across the quiet lake in the evening stillness, frightening timid women and little children. Occasionally strong men, well charmed against evil spirits, went out with chains and ropes to seize and bind him. A mad scramble ensued among the rocks and tombs. Stones were thrown, curses hurled, and in the end the would-be captors, bruised and sore, retreated defeated.

We know from the modern Oriental world that these are but a part of the cruel picture. It was then, as now, a world of child labor. The boy Jesus in the temple needs to be matched with a picture of the boy Jesus in the carpenter shop—a small, dark lad, not yet in his teens, kneeling in the dim shop, adze in hand, hacking at the rough wood which Joseph brings to finished work. Back bent, hands hard, muscles aching, "Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature." So grew other children. Hardly more than toddlers, they went into the fields to pull weeds, glean grain, and tend sheep. At home the girls learned to spin, weave, and carry the heavy water jars.

Animals were no better off. For his beast, the Oriental had no mercy. Underfed, overloaded, beaten, driven beyond endurance, the ass and the camel plodded in misery and pain. Smarting galls, lame hoofs, sore mouths, blind-



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ed eyes, bruised bodies, what did it matter? A beast was a beast. If one sometimes belabored one's children, how much more one's pack animal!

This cruelty sat triumphant in government. Imperial Rome ruled, lord of Galilee and Judea. Gouging publicans, who had sold themselves to the hated foreign government to get rich, bid the taxes high. Taxing was not a matter of percentage on property and profit. Rather, it levied all the traffic would bear. Everyone feared to show even elementary prosperity. The tax-gathering publican, who saw all, came swiftly. Away flew one's hard-got gains.

Brutal soldiers policed the country. A man never knew when one, armed with spear and shield, would be met in the way. "Halt!" At the spear's point the traveler would be loaded with the heavy paraphernalia of war and be forced to march a mile or more bearing the burdensome equipment. Or he might find himself hauled before a magistrate and charged with crime. In bewilderment, he could only stammer his innocence. But close by stood a policing soldier, pressing the charges. A quick wink passed between judge and soldier, and a heavy fine was imposed upon the prisoner. The money paid and the prisoner released, these two culprits of justice split the fee. It is such practices as these that lie behind John the Baptist's stern command to the soldiers, "Be content with your wages."

Rome, it is said, was lenient. All she asked was regular tribute and the keeping of good order. Local customs and

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laws flourished unmolested. But the native Galilean and Judean, in actual practice, found it harsh. The Herods and Pilates who served as official governors were vindictive and murderous, their soldiers often mean and brutal, their tax-gatherers rapacious and robbing. The oppressed masses waited anxiously for Someone who should "deliver his people."

Such was the world of Jesus, and the daily conditions of his environment. What is its significance? For this is not the Gospel. It is but elementary, first century sociology. What does it mean for our knowledge of Jesus and his Gospel?

It means that Jesus lived in a real world, a world that bristled with stark, modern problems: poverty, dirt, disease, ignorance, superstition, brutality, and oppression. Everywhere these reared their ugly heads and hissed their defiance at the first preacher of the Gospel. Jesus moved amid the raw realities of life.

There are devout scholars who deny this, saying that the conditions of his living so differed from ours that he has but little to say to our own day. Today he is but a novice. He never saw a factory, or heard it clatter. He never listened to a radio or rode in an automobile; he never visited a hospital or worked in a scientific laboratory. He is a back number. These are but the gadgets of life. Life itself Jesus knew—birth and death, work and wages, sickness and despair, poverty and hunger, cruelty and greed, hope and prayer. At bottom, life in



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his environment paralleled the life of our environment. His problems are our problems. Every human goodness and evil, dream and failure which we know, he also knew. He offered his Gospel to a world like ours, budding with goodness and reeking with sins—our goodness and our sins. If what he had to say was pertinent then, it is pertinent now. If he was sensible then, he is sensible now. It is to this world of mingled good and evil, then and now, that he offers himself and his Gospel.

Also, it means if the Gospel was effective then, it can be effective now. It was not given to save some fixed up world that might evolve after ages of progress and reform. It was offered as an immediate hope to that suffering, sinning world in which he lived. This is our hope. For our world is like his world. If the Gospel could spread abroad in those infertile times, it can come to increasing harvest now. Jesus expected men to be transformed where they were *at once*, by the power of God.

This dark picture of Jesus' environment is the bold assertion: You do not need to wait for a better world. You do not need to seek a change of circumstance. The Gospel is for the "right now" and the "as is." You take the Gospel and you *become* the new world. You accept the Gospel and the new world begins of itself. Thus it happened, in that ancient world, to Peter and Paul. Since their world is ours, it can happen to us. Now, as always, it is for whosoever will "repent and believe the gospel" that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

## CHAPTER TWO

### HIS HERITAGE

*"We know this man whence he is"*

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EVERY MAN IS BORN INTO THIS WORLD TRAILING MORE THAN clouds of glory. He brings a frame of body, a bent of mind, a bundle of emotions, and a set of aptitudes fore-patterned and fixed by his double family tree. Also, every man is born into a ready-made society of fixed beliefs, conventional customs, stern taboos, and illogical prejudices. Their influence the newcomer can never escape. As with his ancestors, they become an integral part of him.

Thus came Jesus, dragging the impress of his forebears into a society ready-made by his predecessors. If we are to see Jesus as they remembered him, we must explore both his ancestry and the society and conceptions which he inherited.

Of Jesus' family heritage but little is known. How it affected him, even less can be concluded. His father was Joseph, the carpenter. Any higher paternity was quite unknown in his own day. In his own time he was



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known simply as "the son of Joseph." Beyond Joseph's being the head of Jesus' boyhood home, the husband of Mary, the father of a family, and a village artisan, we have no information whatsoever. After the nativity stories, he is named only three times, and alluded to but once. Of his characteristics there is nothing. Had he been careless, brutal, or gross, it is inferred, Jesus could hardly have thought of God so persistently in the warm parental terms of fatherhood. Joseph, therefore, must have been a noble man. But this remains an inference. The rest is silence.

Of Mary, the mother of Jesus, little more is known. After the birth stories she enters the New Testament scene barely five times. Taut and troubled she hurries back to Jerusalem seeking her missing boy. Bustling and commanding she is in active assistance at the Cana wedding. Anxious and insistent she suddenly appears in distant Capernaum urgently asking for her busy son. Pitiably and anguished she stands that dreadful day at the foot of the cross. Honored and serene she sits, after the resurrection, in the upper room surrounded by the first believers. Her personality and individual qualities must remain of uncertain inference. We know nothing more.

Of Jesus' remaining relatives we know even less. His four brothers, "James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon," are merely named in the Synoptics, and that but once. John records in addition that "his brethren did not believe on him." This, with James's leadership of the Jerusalem church in Acts, is all we have. Of Jesus' sisters we know neither their number nor their names. They pass with a

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single mention merely as "his sisters." Of his other living relatives we are informed of only Zachariah, Elizabeth, and their late-born son who became "the Baptizer." Zacharias and Elizabeth disappear with the nativity story's close. John the Baptist is said to be six months Jesus' senior. As distance went in those days they dwelt far apart. Apparently when they met at the Jordan fords, at Jesus' own baptism, they met as strangers. Other living relatives Jesus must have had, but all remembrance of them has vanished.

Of Jesus' ancestry the reports are confused. Genealogies are always difficult and often uncertain. There was a universal belief among Jesus' first followers that he was of Davidic descent. But Jesus himself, as they remembered him, neither mentioned nor made use of it. The two genealogies given by Matthew and Luke are in detailed disagreement. Neither was written to retail Jesus' forebears, but each to prove a point. Matthew's list, which is forced into an artificial arithmetical design, proclaims Jesus as the messianic King descended from the great David. Luke extols Jesus as the Son of God, tracing his ancestors back beyond Adam to God himself. These two tables, whose differences cannot be reconciled, afford at best but a list of names. About many of them we know very little. What they definitely contributed to Jesus' inheritance must remain as vague as what our own European predecessors of the Middle Ages gave to us. We can learn nothing more.

Of Jesus' ancestral village we are similarly uncertain.



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Had we only Matthew's story we would conclude that the family seat was in Bethlehem of Judea. Only the fear of Herod's atrocities provoked the removal to distant Nazareth. Had we but Luke's account, we would be certain that the family had long resided in Galilee. Only the incident of Augustus' census occasioned Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. The two stories cannot be dovetailed into a harmonious unity. Fortunately it is no matter. The influences that molded Jesus' unfolding life were indisputably those of liberal Galilee.

This is the little we can gather about Jesus' ancestral inheritance. This matter of one's heritage, so intriguing to modern psychographers, yields nothing with which to draw illuminating conclusions. Ancient writers were rarely interested in ancestral influences. Nor is this lack of information as negative as at first appears. Inheritance facts, although usually important and sometimes enlightening, are often disappointing. Frequently they give little information of value. Our elaborate knowledge of Lincoln's ancestry throws scarcely a gleam on the origin and bent of his genius. As with all genius, a full knowledge of Jesus' ancestry would probably fall far short of explaining even a small part of his grandeur.

Except at one clear point. His Nazareth home had a profound influence upon his religious thought and insight. Growing up under Joseph and Mary, working and playing with his brothers and sisters made a vital contribution to his religious emphases. *Always he thought of religion in family terms.* Other factors doubtless added

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their part to this end, but his Nazareth home life must be included as an all-important element. Religion has been based upon ecclesiastical officials, rituals, and offerings. It has been built upon national conceptions of law, government, and sovereignty. It has been conceived in terms of orthodoxy in belief and practice. But for Jesus the central elements in religion were domestic.

He depicted the Kingdom of God, in terms, not of governmental functions, but of family relationships. He described the Deity, not awesomely as a regal sovereign, but intimately as "your heavenly Father." He portrayed man's relation to God, not as an abject subject cringing before an august king, but as a trusting child rejoicing in the presence of his caring parent. "Ye shall be sons of the Most High." He described the dealings of man with man, not even as neighbor with neighbor but in terms of his Nazareth home as brother with brother. "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them." In the very presence of his mother and his brothers he boldly pronounced that religion reached its glory in an experience expressible only in terms of family affection. "For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is brother, and sister, and mother."

Jesus' cosmological inheritance was, in the light of our modern knowledge, weird and terrible. He lived, as the best knowledge of his day believed, upon a flat earth. This flat, stationary earth they thought was the most



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stupendous substance God had made. It was the center and focus of all creation. Overhead like an overturned bowl arched the solid sky. From its solid surface, like lights from a ceiling, hung the burning sun, the glowing moon, and the tiny stars. Beneath the earth lay gloomy Sheol. In its dusky caverns dwelt the souls of the departed, awaiting the general resurrection. Surrounding everything was a vast mass of water, so that the solid sky, the central earth, and the cellarlike Sheol resembled a ball submerged in an ocean. High upon the waters over the sky floated the seven-tiered heavens. In them abode myriads of created, invisible spirits. To them after the Judgment would go the souls of the resurrected.

Such was the general scheme of creation which Jesus inherited. To us it seems absurdly fantastic. But when one remembers the stern limitations of ancient knowledge, it does not appear so silly. Possessed of neither microscope, telescope, test tube, nor means to circumnavigate the earth, how could they have done better? Able to learn only from what the naked eye could observe, their construction of the cosmos was surprisingly "scientific." This was the conception Jesus inherited. None better was possible.

Unlike ourselves, the Jews of Jesus' day made no sharp distinction between cosmology and theology. Into their "scientific" description of the universe they wrote their religious beliefs. Hence, in Jesus' cosmological heritage God had as real a place as the stars and hills. Above the flat, immovable earth, beyond the arching bowl of the

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firmament, and over the seven-storied heavens, rested the abode of God. There in majestic glory, from the splendor of his throne, the Absolute Sovereign of all his creation ruled by direct command.

Men in Jesus' time had no understanding of natural law. They conceived of no orderly processes of nature standing between them and the acts of the Creator. He personally superintended every detailed operation of his universe. There could be no such thing as luck, chance, or accident. The falling of Siloam's tower and Pilate's slaughtering the Galilean pilgrims were mysterious events proceeding directly from the inscrutable will of God. The first was not an accident, nor the second the hysterical deed of a brutal ruler's attempt to nip a revolutionary plot in the bud. Both were acts of God in punishment of sin. Nothing happened without the concurrence of the Divine Sovereign. Sometimes it was mediated, but not through natural law. It was carried out through the faithful ministrations of his servants, the holy angels. Or it was permitted to come to pass through the wicked, hostile acts of malicious demons.

This belief in invisible spirits formed another part of Jesus' inherited cosmology. They peopled the great spaces between the abode of God and the flat earth. The evil demons, as has already been told, worked all manner of troubles. But also there were the holy angels who brought God's blessings and care to men. "He shall give his angels charge over thee." Jesus' compatriots believed in these invisible spirits so thoroughly that they felt certain they



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knew about them in full detail; who they were, what they did, where they lived, how they could be used, warded off, or controlled. It was Gabriel, one of the greatest of great angels, the first Christians thought, who brought the news of Jesus' conception to the humble Mary. As to demons, Satan, they believed was the commander-in-chief of these evil armies.

This entire cosmic structure, so men believed, operated upon a definite plan. Since creation's dawn, "this age" had been creeping along toward the surely arriving "coming age." "This age," which is history as we know it, torn by evil and leavened by good, would suddenly end in the Judgment Day. Then wickedness would be conquered and good would emerge triumphant. The righteous and the sinful would be permanently separated. "He shall separate the one from the other as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats." Then creation will have completed its divine purpose and the glorious eternity will have begun.

This, then, was the strange cosmic heritage of Jesus. Much of it is accepted popular religion today. The Jewish heritage of Jesus has become the heritage of uncounted modern believers. However different their geography of a round earth and astronomy of vast interstellar spaces, millions of sincere believers today think of God and his universe in large part in terms of Jesus' Jewish heritage.

It must be noted, however, that *none of these ideas originated with Jesus*. They are no direct part of his original revelation to men. These ideas he inherited.

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Because they were the best that could then be known, it was inevitable that they should form an intimate part of Jesus' mental furniture. Crude and curious as this cosmological heritage appears to us, it was as frightening to the people of Jesus' time as our vaster universe is to many moderns. Like ourselves, the ancients needed deliverance from their cosmic fears.

Jesus as they remembered him had no cosmic fears. As far as we can detect, Jesus accepted the cosmological heritage of his day as entirely valid. Had he believed differently, his audience could no more have credited and accepted him than could ordinarily well-educated people today adhere to some harebrained religionist who preached a cylindrical earth and a pyramid sky. But although Jesus' cosmic understanding was like his neighbors, *his reactions were utterly different*. For him there was in all creation nothing to fear any time, anywhere. The whole universal order demonstrated the providential care of God for the good of men. God was more intimate, careful, and concerned than even Jesus' contemporaries dared believe. His creation was *by nature* safe. "If God so clothes the grass of the field . . . shall he not much more clothe you? Be not therefore anxious . . . for your heavenly Father knoweth. . . ." "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father . . . fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Jesus' national heritage was in some aspects acutely



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modern. Totalitarian, imperial Rome, queen of the Tiber, ruled the civilized world. For the ardent, sensitive Jews it was a double humiliation. As in their cosmic views, so in their nationalism they made no sharp distinction between their patriotism and their religion. Theirs was a religious nationalism. Unlike the modern Japanese, who make their nationalism their religion, the national heritage of Jesus expressed its nationalism through religion. To be conquered by pagan, idol-worshipping Rome meant a double defeat, the defeat of their nation and the defeat of their God. Contrary to their understanding of the Mosaic law, it forced them to use graven-imaged Roman coins. Caesar's face was stamped upon one surface and some hated Roman idol was imprinted upon the other. Against such blasphemous indignities every loyal Jew seethed with hope of eventual revolt and the breaking of the Roman yoke.

The long, tragic history of the Jews made Jesus' national inheritance the more poignant. Through the increasing centuries of their history two matters ran like red threads through a dark tapestry: the covenant with Abraham and the messianic hope. Far back in the dim beginnings God had solemnly sworn to make the Hebrews great and his own name supreme among the nations. Eventually the Jews had come to believe that God would do this suddenly and finally. Upon a great Day of the Lord he would send his Anointed One, the Mighty Messiah, to fulfill his purposes in Israel and among the peoples of the earth.

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But through all the centuries the burning hope had been thwarted. Geographically the Promised Land was ringed about by hostile kingdoms: Edom, Moab, Philistia, Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Media, Greece, and Rome. Near or far these nations eyed the little rocky ridge of Canaan, and one after another swooped upon and devoured it. Throughout her long history Israel was for the most part under the iron heel of foreign domination. Internally matters were no better. Weak rulers, vacillating foreign policies, heathen practices, cruel injustices, and galling oppressions sapped the national vitality, breeding rebellion and decay. And now, at long last, the Jews of Jesus' day found their land numbered as a petty province in an obscure corner of a world-wide, domineering empire.

Under this domination of Rome Jesus grew up. It was the most vivid part of his national heritage. Under such Rome-appointed subrulers as the sly, immoral Herod of Galilee, known as "the Fox," and the hot-tempered, vacillating, tactless, stubborn governor-general of Judea, Pontius Pilate, the Jews were sullen and angry. Some time the Day of the Lord and Messiah would come, when God would deliver his people and Rome would receive the punishment she merited.

However, except for inevitable brutalities and injustices inflicted by foreign officials and troops upon a conquered people, if one kept the peace, life could be fairly congenial. Unlike modern fascist states, Rome was too wise to regiment her subject peoples. Local customs, laws,



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and religions were respected. Freedom of trade, worship, and travel were unmolested. If a Jew were law-abiding and paid the onerous taxes, he could dwell undisturbed, practice the faith of his fathers, attain some measure of prosperity, enjoy all necessary freedom, and wait in hope for Messiah and the Day of the Lord.

Parts of Jesus' national heritage were made vivid by the setting of Nazareth. From the brow of the hill back of the town there spread before him many of the Old Testament's most memorable scenes. Within eyeshot stood sites made famous by great events of the dimming past: Mounts Tabor, Gilboa, and Carmel and Megiddo's mound; Esdraelon's valley and the river Kishon; the villages of Endor, Jezreel, and Shuman. With these were associated the names of redoubtable Deborah, crafty Gideon, tragic Saul, stern Elijah, kindly Elisha, troubled Ahab, energetic Jezebel, bloody Jehu, and unfortunate Josiah. On the distant southern horizon could be discerned places enfolded by founder Abraham, patriarch Jacob, and regal Joseph. To the growing Jesus, national history was not dead textbook knowledge. Many of its sites lay before his eyes, and many of its scenes stood within walking distance.

Such was the national heritage of Jesus: an environment rich in historical scenes and memories, education crammed with historical facts and ablaze with national hopes, a contemporary life subjugated to imperial Rome, an acquaintance with neighbors seething with discontent, plotting uprisings to overthrow the oppressor, and longing

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for the expected Messiah who should put down the mighty from their seat and exalt them of low degree.

Jesus reacted to this national heritage with characteristic independence. He seems to have recognized the reasonableness of the patriotic demand for national restoration and freedom. At least, he uttered no direct word against it. He apparently felt a deep and understanding sympathy of the universal hatred of Roman domination.

But while he never rebuked the national hope, he never encouraged it. He quenched the popular uprising to make himself the messianic king who should destroy the Roman power. He recognized the inevitability of the Roman authority. No force in Palestine could be mustered capable of ejecting it. To attempt it would mean the repetition of the sorry story of the Galilean revolt, with worse defeat and crueler punishment.

Moreover, violence was never Jesus' way. He was opposed to it in principle. "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you." Hate would only beget hate, and violence but increase violence. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you." One cruel domination would merely be followed by another equally harsh. Vengeful violence must give way to active good will.

Hence Jesus counseled the only sane course, quiet acceptance of the Roman domination. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." To do otherwise would invite disaster. But patient acceptance would bring a tolerable measure of justice, freedom, and peace.



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Besides, Jesus saw that the whole matter lay beyond human ability. His outlook on such matters was apocalyptic, that point of view so strangely alien and utterly puzzling to the modern mind. For apocalypticism in its inner principle is a conviction that in times of utter human helplessness God acts directly upon social situations.<sup>1</sup> Judgment and grace apply not only to persons but also to society. Such an injustice as the Jews suffered under Roman rule could be rectified only by the intervention of God himself. Efforts by the Jews themselves, instead of bringing relief, would aggravate the trouble. God alone had power sufficient to right the wrong. This is one of the far-reaching truths of religion largely ignored today. In times of universal breakdown, puny man is helpless. When history shatters to pieces only God can salvage the wreckage and bring good out of the consequent chaos.

A kingdom would come, Jesus proclaimed, that the Jews could enter. It would fulfill the central reality of their messianic dreams more grandly than they could ever hope. But it would be no political kingdom. It would come neither by bloody revolution nor exhausting human effort. It would come only as the gift of God. "It is my Father's good pleasure to *give* you the kingdom."

Thus Jesus rose above and outranged his national heritage. He saw beyond the kingdoms of this world to a higher kingdom, "not of this world," the gift of his Father to men—a kingdom beyond all races and cultures, all

<sup>1</sup> Apocalypticism has further, larger aspects which are of no direct concern here.

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geographical boundaries and earthly dominations, all limitations of history and time. This kingdom above all kingdoms he taught men to desire above all desires. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." For that kingdom, which could come only as the gift of God, he urged all men earnestly to prepare. "When ye pray say . . . thy kingdom come."

Jesus' religious heritage was too manifold to permit extended exposition here. All the elaborate paraphernalia of religion which we know—the temple, the village synagogues, the sacred writings, priests, the Sabbath, almsgiving, fastings, and tithings—all were familiar to Jesus. His religious heritage was highly developed, costly and beautiful, rich in national history and prophetic teaching. It was organized to preserve the Sabbath, teach the Scriptures, enforce the Commandments, and provide the means of worship for humble Jews everywhere. It was adequate to kindle the faith and enrich the spirits of all sincere believers.

Most of this religious heritage Jesus accepted without question. He had frequent hostile clashes with individuals of various religious parties, but rarely on the basis of their party tenets. With parties as parties he seems to have been unconcerned. Certain of the more meticulous religious practices, as regular mechanical fastings, food taboos, ceremonial washings, ostentatious public prayers, showy almsgiving, and inhuman Sabbath regulations, he ridiculed as religion gone to seed. But taken as a whole,



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Jesus accepted the basic essentials of his religious heritage as good and true.

Two other matters of fundamental importance, not so readily grasped today, were a vital part of Jesus' religious inheritance. The first was the strictly Jewish matter of the messianic hope. This was no simple, unified idea upon which all were agreed in detail. It was a complex expectation, and understanding of it varied widely. Its major elements consisted of the promised Messiah, heralding the advent of the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom God would send upon the Day of the Lord, at a final judgment which would be ushered in by the coming of the glorious Son of Man upon the clouds of heaven. Such, at least, seems to be in rough outline the great hope lying back of the gospel writings.

Exactly how far Jesus accepted such a schedule for the promised Messiah, New Testament scholars are not agreed. Did he begin his ministry possessed of a full-fledged messianic consciousness, and did he start his preaching mission expecting to see it consummated by the judgment and the arrival of the Son of Man? So many scholars believe. Or did his ideas on these matters grow and change as he went along? Did he first think of himself as the Messiah heralding the Judgment and the coming Son of Man, but under the pressure of the increasing difficulties of his ministry adopt a new ideal for himself, that of Isaiah's Suffering Servant, and make that messianic in purpose? This other scholars believe. What we can be sure of is that in Jesus as they remembered

## HIS HERITAGE

him their deep-rooted hope, the establishment of the Kingdom of God, that central desire of all devout Jews, had been perfectly fulfilled.

The other central element in Jesus' religious heritage was the sacrificial system. It not only existed in Judaism, but in all gentile religions as well. Animal sacrifice, the shedding of blood, was the *central climactic act* of all religion. Without question men everywhere believed that "apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." During his ministry Jesus overleaped this requirement. "And Jesus . . . saith unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven." Instantly sharp criticism descended upon him. "Who can forgive sins but one, even God?" Jesus was not only forgiving sins with blasphemous presumption, but doing so without benefit of blood-offering. The necessity of blood-sacrifice appears nowhere in his teachings. The good shepherd seeking the lost sheep "until he find it," the prodigal son's father welcoming home his ragged boy, the vineyard keeper digging and dunging about the barren fig tree "one year more," are all proclamations of a forgiving love freely offered without need of sacrifice and offerings.

With Jesus a kind of slaughter-house religion ended. That part of his religious heritage based upon animal sacrifice he forever abolished. Jesus as they remembered him opened a direct way to the Father. As later believers loved to put it, he "brake down the middle wall of partition." Forever after him "the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom."



### *JESUS AS THEY REMEMBERED HIM*

These were the chief elements of Jesus' heritage. No great man ever wholly outgrows his heritage, nor is he ever wholly bound by it. The greater he is, the less he is bound. Some local aspects of his inheritance Jesus never outgrew. Nor was it necessary that he should. They belonged to the non-essential and the unimportant. Other phases belonging to the inner nature of things, forever and everywhere valid, he did not in wisdom abandon. But in his greatness he cast off the narrow taboos, the cramping restrictions, the fussy exactions, and the silly fears of his heritage. By overcoming its limitations, Jesus as they remembered him became the promise that his followers also could triumph over the restrictions of their heritage. "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

## CHAPTER THREE

### HIS BODY

*"This is my body"*

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THE GOSPEL MEMORIES TELL US NOTHING DIRECTLY OF JESUS' physical appearance. Of his height, weight, and features there is not a word. Any conception of his general physical appearance must be wholly imaginary. However, this does not mean that we know nothing of his physique. Certain aspects of his looks we know. The Bible gives such physical information when it is essential. Jacob limped, Moses was endowed with great energy, Eli was excessively fat, and Paul's eyes were bright and piercing. Such information is never sufficient to draw detailed portraits, but it is enough to present certain essential aspects of body and character.

Likewise, the gospels reveal characteristic details of Jesus' appearance as his first friends remembered him. Of his actual features nothing is said. Probably Jesus was like other Galileans—a typical Semite of middle stature, olive complexion, jet black hair, thin curly black beard, sharply chiseled aquiline nose, and small pointed chin. While this is conjectural, it may be true. But in other



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particulars of his physical makeup, the gospel memories are quite definite.

Whether a man is robust or sickly, nervous or phlegmatic, is significant. One's general well-being usually colors one's views and reactions to life. It may make one morose or crabby, or radiant and winsome. It may cause one to seem timid or pessimistic, or aggressive and capable. Jesus' general constitution offers a paradox. On the one side, he radiated energy and health. In his presence the tired, the sickly and enervated were invigorated. His good digestion made him a welcome guest at banquets, and his happy spirits gave him a reputation among the staid and pious for unseemly gaiety. On the other side, strong and health-giving though Jesus was, he was often tired to exhaustion. His was no prize-fighter's physique, able to take sledge-hammer blows on an iron chin without wincing. His giving forth health to others exhausted him. Upon one occasion he asserted, "I perceived that power had gone forth from me." Upon another occasion he was exhausted by midday. "Being wearied with the journey . . . he sat down thus by the well," to rest, while his disciples, still vigorous, "were gone away into the city to buy food." At another time, needing to recuperate, he requested of his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake . . . And they take him with them, even as he was, in the boat . . . And there ariseth a great storm . . . And he himself was in the stern, asleep on a cushion." Although his disciples had grown

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up by the lake, swum in it from boyhood, knew its whims and moods, and as fishermen were expert in handling their boats, yet this storm had them thoroughly scared. The wind roared, the sail spanked, the mast creaked, the waves slapped into the boat, the sailor-disciples shouted and bailed. But the weary Jesus slept. Power had gone forth completely from him.

On the other hand, Jesus was remembered as being exquisitely sensitive. He was delicately keyed to pain in himself and in others. He shrank from his coming crucifixion. Its burning pains early quivered along his sensitive nerves. While it was still some way off he sighed, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it is accomplished!" On the night before he suffered, "he began to be greatly amazed and sore troubled." After the agonies of Gethsemane and the lashings at his trial, he was too beaten out to carry his cross. Forced to attempt it, his sensitive body failed. A little way along the street he fell to the ground. After being nailed to the cross, he died so quickly that officials could not believe that the end had come. "Pilate marvelled that he was already dead."

This sensitivity of Jesus is one evidence of his greatness. There is a fad abroad that the tough pugilist is a great hero. Such toughness may be proof that one is merely a brute. In Jesus' "being touched with the feeling of our infirmities" lies the measure of his strength. The disciples never forgot his strong but sensitive body, which



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poured out its energies in a continual self-emptying, "a ransom for many."

For the understanding of character the eyes are indispensable—eyes bright or dull, shifty or frank, timid or bold, cruel or winsome, sorrowful or humorous, forbidding or friendly. A man's character lives in his eyes.

"As Jesus passed by, he saw." His eyes were like sweeping searchlights, seeing all, missing nothing. "He looked round" is the repeated phrase that describes his all-embracing gaze. One Sabbath in the synagogue as his opponents watched him, seeking to accuse him, his blazing eyes "looked about on them." They wilted. Immediately "they went out, and straightway took counsel how they might destroy him." At another time, while speaking in a crowded house, "his mother and his brethren standing without, sent unto him, calling him." The rumor had spread about that "he was beside himself." It seems likely that these relatives had come to take him home. Back in quiet Nazareth, in the dull monotony of the carpenter shop, they hoped to restore his sanity. Jesus' great eyes flashed. "And looking round on them that sat round about him," he took them in one by one as he ejaculated, "Behold, my mother and my brethren!" After the rich young ruler had taken his sorrowful departure, the disciples fell to arguing the matter. If a clean, religious, eager, wealthy young man could not become a disciple, who could? Stopping in the way, Jesus' eyes swept over

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them. "Jesus looking upon them saith, With man it is impossible."

"The chief priests and the scribes with the elders" and the people also fell under his inspecting vision. Evading the trap of their catch question, Jesus attacked them in turn through the parable of the wicked husbandmen. When his hearers, amazed at the parable's stern conclusion, shouted "God forbid! Be it not so!" they found themselves confronted with that sweeping look. "But he looked upon them, and said, What then is this that is written?" It was the swift survey of his eyes that none could confront unabashed, that cut them down.

The last record of his all-seeing eyes precedes the cleansing of the temple. Jesus "entered into Jerusalem," and going "into the temple, looked round about on all things." He saw those that sold sacrifices, the money-changers sitting at their tables, and shoppers taking their short-cut through the court into the city, or out to the villages on Olivet. He saw every detail for exactly what it was, an honest convenience become, in the name of religion, a private graft. It was these sweeping, all-seeing eyes that his earliest followers never forgot. Of his ears there is not a syllable, of his nose not a word, of his hair not a memory. But his eyes still flame like torches from the gospel pages.

Jesus' eyes not only swept over the crowds; they penetrated into the individual. They not only surveyed, they searched. It is written once and again, "He looked on him." A more accurate translation of the Greek



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is, "He looked *into* him." The rich young ruler was forced to undergo a like examination. "And Jesus looking upon him loved him." The Master was seeking out any sham, falsehood, or weakness that might be there and perceiving every bit of courage, nobility, and possible heroism. What he saw was so fine in quality and rich in promise that Jesus at once fell in love with him. In the end it was those eyes that defeated the young man. Jesus was not fooling. The rich young ruler lacked the stamina to meet Jesus' demand to leave all and follow.

Even the Fourth Gospel keeps this tradition bright.<sup>1</sup> Its reference to Jesus' eyes as he appraised Peter at the Jordan is thoroughly synoptic. "Jesus looked upon him." It was more than a casual survey. It was a sharp X-ray that at once set a present appraisal and a future evaluation upon the foremost disciple.

On the last night of Jesus' life, Peter had again to face those boring eyes. Cowed by fear, tired in body, bewildered in mind, surrounded by hostile watchers, suspected by followers of the court, and accused by the portress, Peter took an oath that he had never known the famous Galilean. "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and Peter remembered." Forever he remembered not merely the solemn warning of his denial, but the penetrating look that was his salvation.

One is not surprised to find that he who so used his eyes expected his followers to do likewise. Again and again Jesus cried, "Behold!" "Behold the fowls of the

<sup>1</sup> See Note I, p. 217.

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air!" "Behold, a sower went forth to sow!" "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees!" "Behold, my mother and my brethren!" His own eager eyes had brought to him the knowledge of God's infinite care over every detail of his creation. If men wanted convictions about God's ways in his universe, they, likewise, must teach their eyes to sweep over and penetrate all.

References to Jesus' hands are numerous. For Jesus was accustomed to using them. His long years as an artisan had given him skilled hands, habituated to work. It was inevitable that he should make the most of them.

A man's hands possess two great functions. They can acquire practical skill for various forms of ministration, from writing a note or playing a violin to building a wall or binding a bandage. In them also abides moral power. A soothing hand laid upon the restless brings a quieting calm. A restraining hand cautioning the rash may prevent a disastrous blunder. An encouraging hand pressed upon the timid can stimulate bold action. A friendly hand extended to the lonely brings a warm sense of fellowship. Jesus' hands manifested both kinds of power. His were trained artisan hands extended in practical helpfulness, and the hands of a great soul given in blessing.

All through the gospels his practical hands are busy. Finding Peter's mother-in-law sick with the fever, he "took her by the hand and raised her up." To the leper who besought him, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," Jesus stretched forth his hand and touched him.



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Going into the room where Jairus' daughter lay "sleeping," he took her "by the hand" and raised her up. At Nazareth he "laid his hands on a few sick folk."

This memory of Jesus' serving hands was so tenacious that even in that miracle most seriously questioned by careful scholars,<sup>2</sup> they are busy. In the fishing town of Bethsaida, "he took hold of the blind man by the hand and brought him out of the city." There he "laid his hand upon him. . . . And again he laid his hands upon his eyes."

After the convulsion which threw the epileptic boy upon the ground, leaving him limp and unconscious, the bystanders exclaimed, "He is dead." But Jesus "took him by the hand and raised him up." It was likewise with the infirm woman whom he met in the synagogue one sabbath, who was "bowed together" so that she "could in no wise lift herself up." Jesus at once "laid his hands upon her." This custom of the Galilean Carpenter of forever using his hands continues alive in the Johannine tradition. When he healed the blind man, it was with his hands that Jesus "made clay of the spittle and anointed his eyes."

Jesus used his hands until people began to think magic resided in them. They superstitiously believed that in his hands dwelt some mysterious power. Jairus pleaded with Jesus, "My little daughter . . . come and lay thy hands on her." Likewise did the friends of the deaf mute, who besought Jesus "to lay his hands upon him."

<sup>2</sup> See Note II, p. 218.

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Also, the friends of the blind man led him to Jesus and urged him "to touch him." At Nazareth the old neighbors, used to seeing Jesus working with his hands, observed how he "laid his hands on a few sick folk." They questioned among themselves, "What mean such mighty works wrought by his hands?" Whatever questions one may have about these acts of healing, it is certain that this manual worker from Nazareth, when he laid aside his tools for his preaching mission, continued the practical use of his hands.

Jesus also used his hands to moral purpose. They were hands of blessing, as well as hands of practical helpfulness. "They were bringing unto him little children that he should touch them." Perhaps their eager mothers thought that those hands which could cure disease and expel demons would be strong to prevent some untoward disaster from falling upon their little ones. Taking the little ones in his arms, "he blessed them, laying his hands upon them." At the feeding of the five thousand, during the Last Supper, and at the meal at Emmaus, "he took bread, and when he had blessed, he brake it" with his hands. It seems certain that it was Jesus' custom, whenever he partook of bread, to ask a blessing by holding it in his hands. Hence, "he was known to them in the breaking of bread."

These vivid memories of his hands was carried over into the resurrection stories. The timid disciples, fearing that he was a ghost, found reassurance in seeing his hands. As they later related it, he stood before them with arms



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outstretched in reassurance and blessing, saying, "See my hands!"

Nor is it surprising that when Jesus himself came to die, he should long for the comfort and support of hands. In early childhood he had been held in his mother's arms and received the ministrations of her hands. In full manhood his hands had supplied the village with plows and yokes, and during his ministry they had eagerly ministered to every kind of need. Now as death began to touch him, he felt the need of strong, supporting hands. "Father," he called, "into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Jesus' gait is referred to only once, but that once is a revelation. One's stride tells much of one's personality and even of one's occupation. Whether one's step is firm or shuffling, swinging or lagging, is an index to one's age, health, and character.

Like all Palestinians, Jesus walked. His tours among the Galilean villages were walking tours. Of the manner of his stride there is but one memory. He was going for the last time to Jerusalem. The leisurely, easy-going pace of the Oriental vanished. His walk became a swift, determined march. "And they were on their way, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them: and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid." One can see Jesus in the early green of the Palestinian spring, tramping ahead, alone, erect, determined, firm-footed. Tramp, tramp, the steady, resolute step went on, while the disciples full of foreboding lagged cautiously

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behind. It was the gait of one determined upon completing his full purpose at whatever cost. It was the tread of one who saw his way and would not be hindered. The earliest believers never forgot the resolute beat of that final journey. In his very gait marched his sacrifice for the life of the world.

The timbre and tone of Jesus' voice will never be known. Not even the wildest guess can be made concerning its pitch and tone. Was it high or low, smooth or rasping, musical or didactic? This is not an idle matter, for a man's voice indicates something of his moods and character. A gruff voice may indicate a tough character and a thin voice show bodily weakness. A mechanical voice may betray a lack of emotional sympathy, and a quick voice manifests mental acumen. But in reference to the pitch and tone of Jesus' voice not a memory remains.

There is, however, one aspect of Jesus' voice as they remembered it that still rings in the gospel stories. They remembered its sudden, surprising loudness. It had the startling surprise of an unexpected trumpet blast. One would infer from this that ordinarily it was a quiet, well-modulated voice. Certainly it had about it a winsome attractiveness that won the confidence of little children. Little children are often oppressed with shyness. But when Jesus called they apparently came with gladness. One finds this same winning quality in Jesus' quiet command to Jairus' "sleeping" daughter. As if to her own



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mother's voice, she responded to Jesus' reassuring tones: "Talitha cumi"—"Darling, it's time to get up."

Unexpectedly this kindly voice amazed one. It boomed in the ear like the roll of thunder. The leper whom Jesus cleansed in the way—"he strictly charged him and straightway sent him out." After healing the two blind men, "he strictly charged them, see that no man know it." The Greek word for "strictly charged" is an explosive word. Scholars affirm that in the Septuagint<sup>3</sup> it is used to describe "the blast of the wrath of God." It is plain that Jesus spoke to these men with a strong, insistent emphasis.

At times his tones came with a sharp urgency which terrified even his closest friends. When he announced to his disciples that "the Son of man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him," his voice must have cut like the crack of a whip. For though "they understood not the saying" and though they were his companions, "they were afraid to ask him."

This strong vocal emphasis was as familiar to the crowds as to his followers. Picture a scene. The crowd sat quiet, listening intently to the parable of the sower. It was a tranquil rural tale. Jesus probably spoke in ordinary tones of the harvest, "some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold." "And that is that," doubtless thought many a listener. Then like a clap of thunder from a clear sky, Jesus' great voice startled the crowd into decision: "As he said these things he cried, He that hath

<sup>3</sup> This is the early translation of the Old Testament into Greek. It was in use in Jesus' day among Greek-speaking Jews.

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ears to hear, let him hear!" His disciples never forgot the parable, nor that horizon-echoing cry.

The urgent echoes of Jesus' voice ring again in the Gospel of John. Mary and Martha, with their neighbors, stood before the open tomb of Lazarus. There Jesus' earnest prayer was mingled with the sobs of the mourners. Then like the resurrection trumpet Jesus' voice pealed into the silent cave: "He called with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." The writer of this gospel, looking back upon the memories of Jesus' ministry and recalling the synoptic stories, summed up his whole public career as one last, loud cry urging men to life and light: "Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth . . . on him that sent me."

On the cross, Jesus' resounding voice never lost its power. There too it burst forth with its accustomed startling intensity. After six hours of agony, during which he had spoken but little, suddenly "Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani." Later, after a period of quiet, when friends perhaps thought he was silenced forever, he stirred himself and sent ringing across the city and far out over Olivet the surge of his voice: "Jesus uttered a loud voice." The last bit of his earthly life they had to remember was that one final, sky-filling cry, "Abba!"—"Father!"

This memory of his voice crept into the resurrection stories. Mary, heart-broken, bewildered, could not coax herself from the garden that first Easter morning. One she saw there she supposed "to be the gardner." Then



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came the old, familiar tones. She recognized him by his voice. "Mary!" "Rabboni!"

Still that startling voice shouts from the gospel pages. It speaks of the sincerity and urgency of his soul. It is the expression of his eagerness to win all men to the Father. "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

Such were the general physical aspects of Jesus. While they detail no complete picture, they do increase our understanding of him. His robust form strides across the Galilean countryside on missionary tours, or sits in hearty enjoyment of good food and fellowship at banquet tables. His exquisite sensitiveness is displayed in acts of tenderest compassion and in natural shrinking from personal pain. His burning eyes sweep vividly over the crowds and pierce the souls of men in exact appraisal. In the Nazareth carpenter shop his busy hands toil with tool and plank, and to the multitudes stretch forth in ministries of healing and blessing. With sturdy gait he marches to his final doom and glory on Calvary. Clearest of all, his urgent voice rings in loud appeal across hill and lake. Ever down the centuries sounds its imperious command, "Follow me!"

It was his blessed body that he gave for the salvation of men. On the night that he was betrayed, knowing that his physical life was closing, he took bread and broke it, a symbol that he was giving his flesh for the life of the world. "This is my body," he said, "broken for you."

## CHAPTER FOUR

# HIS EXPERIENCES

*"In all points like as we"*

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A MAN'S EXPERIENCES COLOR HIS ENTIRE LIFE. MISFORTUNES may warp or sour him. The golden spoon of easy circumstances may make him lazy and unsympathetic. A surprising event or unexpected turn of fortune may change his purpose and direction. Jacob facing his brother's murderous glances after stealing the birthright, Paul beholding the shining face of Stephen being stoned, Luther climbing the hard stairs of the Sancta Scala, Lincoln watching slaves sold off the auction block—these are examples of how drastically experiences may affect the life of any man.

It is imperative, then, that we study the experiences of Jesus and their effect upon him. This is not as easy as might be supposed. In the day of the gospel writers, our kind of biography, complete, objective, and chronological, was unknown. Yet, in spite of the fragmentary nature of the gospel stories, the major experiences of Jesus form a psychological unity and continuity. They are not isolated incidents, but are woven throughout like a seamless robe.



### *JESUS AS THEY REMEMBERED HIM*

Of Jesus' earliest experiences nothing was remembered. Not until he stands, according to Jewish and Oriental standards, at the threshold of manhood is there a line on his boyhood. "The formative years" that so delight modern psychographers are a blank. Only one glimpse of him in his youth has come down to us, the boy Jesus in the temple. The whole picture is entrancing. It is that of a normal but precocious boy on his first excursion into the big world. The country carpenter's boy was captivated by the great city. The nation's capital so excited him that, forgetting everything, "he remained behind."

Like all twelve-year-olds, Jesus had an insatiable curiosity. Among the temple teachers "he was both hearing them and asking them questions." Here was a chance to gain answers to problems too stiff for humble Nazarenes to fathom. In the give and take of conversation the temple teachers "were amazed at his understanding and his answers." They saw in him a brilliant boy of remarkable promise. Like all youngsters, he had a boy's natural thoughtlessness of parental worry. He simply could not understand Mary's distraught concern. In uncomprehending surprise he asked, "How is it that ye sought me?" Here is no stay-at-home, lethargic youth; but an active, independent lad, enthralled by the great metropolis and bent on satisfying his curiosity and intellectual hunger.

Then something happened. There in the temple God touched him. Luke is emphatic but cautious about it. "Knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" the

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boy asked his mother. In the Greek the words "in my Father's house" read "*en tois* of my Father." Greek grammarians tell us that *en tois* is an idiom for "in the house." But more literally these words mean simply but vaguely, "in the things of." Words sometimes go from their idiomatic sense back to their original meaning. This seems to be the case here. As such they bring out perfectly the religious awakening of Jesus that great day. "Know ye not that I must be about the things of my Father?" He realized that he was to have something to do with "the things" of his Father—the temple, the Law, religion. Exactly what, he was not yet certain. He glimpsed from afar his coming life work, albeit dimly and boyishly. Just when, where, how, and what he was to do, he did not know. God had called; his soul was astir. The rest could wait.

Again the curtain falls. Of the next score of years not a memory remains. What particular experiences came or what they meant to him, we can never know. These blank years must remain forever blank.

Consecration was the next great experience that came to Jesus of which there is any recollection. That a religious awakening must be followed by a consecration is psychologically inevitable if the awakening is to come to final fruition. Consecration came to Jesus at the baptizing by John. Though separated by years of time it connects directly with his boyhood awakening in the temple. The story is told in symbolical language that cannot be taken



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literally. It is written against the background of the Old Testament, with the view of connecting the baptismal experience of the early Christians with that of Jesus.

How the experience came and what it meant to Jesus is clear. Up the Jordan valley rumors began to drift and circulate in the Nazareth streets that a new prophet was abroad in the land and all Judea was going out to hear him. Could he be the long-awaited Messiah? These stories, coming up from the Jordan, blew as a breath from God upon the young Galilean Carpenter. They fanned the coals of his early awakening into flame. One day he quietly laid aside his tools and went down the Jordan valley to hear the new prophet. Somewhere by a Jordan ford he found John, surrounded by dignified, critical Jerusalem authorities, rough soldiers, shrewd-eyed tax-gatherers and the excitable multitude. John was a strange, uncouth man, coarsely clad, fiery, and eloquent with a stern, cleansing message.

In effect John was proclaiming: God is about to fulfill his long delayed promises. He will provide a Leader who will usher in a thoroughgoing cleansing of the land. In order to become a follower of this Leader you must cease meanness of every sort and at once begin helping the unfortunate. If you desire to join him whom God is sending and are willing to start by generous giving to the needy, show it by stepping into the river for baptism. For John's baptism meant more than a repentance. It was an act of consecration to the new order and the new Leader God would shortly send.

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Jesus must have been fascinated. For years he had been wondering what "the things of his Father" might exactly mean. He had always lived as John had described. Like every good Jew, he wanted to see God's promises fulfilled. He was, like all his fellows, on the lookout for the Promised One. There was nothing to prevent him from consecrating himself to the movement John was inaugurating. In self-consecration he stepped into the water.

As he did so something extraordinary happened in him. This consecration became the step to new revelation. Again, as at the temple in his distant boyhood, God spoke in him. The ancients had no psychological terms with which to relate events of the soul. They had to relate such experiences in picture language. "The heavens opened"; "a dove descended"; "a voice spoke." In these words of the Old Testament, familiar to Jesus and the early Christians, this consecration is recorded. There in the river a new conviction from God flooded his spirit, saying in effect: You have consecrated yourself to the new order proclaimed by John. It is you who are to institute this mighty task. You were called to be about the things of your Father. *This* is the work of your Father.

After long years of waiting Jesus knew! He, the young Nazarene Carpenter, was to inaugurate the new movement John was heralding. The revelation stunned him. What kind of leader should he be? Exactly how should he proceed? He needed to think things over, alone. Stepping from the water he turned his face away from the crowd and sought a "deserted" place. Now he must



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make a crucial decision about the actual work "of the things of his Father."

Decision was the next great experience that came to Jesus. Upon what principles should he carry on his work? If one is to be a lawyer, is one to be a clever winner of cases or a promoter of justice? Is one entering upon teaching to be a mechanical pedantic or an enthusiastic introducer to life? Is a preacher to be a shrewd ecclesiastical climber, an uninspired parish chore-boy, or a self-sacrificing man of God? This issue faces everyone when he chooses his life work.

This is the issue that underlies the story we call "the wilderness temptation." Its direct psychological and spiritual unity with Jesus' consecration at his baptism is plain. Again, because it is told in a symbolism that reflects the thought of the Early Church, many interpretations have been given to it.

The ordinary interpretation, that Jesus was wrestling with his personal desires to make his own life comfortable, win a quick popularity, and gain political power, runs aground in the eyes of many scholars on one great sand-bar. It leaves the inference that Jesus was struggling with thoughts of selfish ways to power. Can it be, they ask, that he who lived the most perfectly unselfish life known to history, was here fighting the battle against self-glification? Would he wait until the full maturity of thirty years before looking the varieties of selfish living straight in the face? There is nothing in Jesus as they remembered

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him which hints that such low motives ever attracted him.

Scholars now give better meanings to Jesus' wilderness experience. They point out how these high mystical experiences never directly concerned Jesus' self-desires. Nor did they result in a mere personal, rapturous sense of the presence of God. They always pointed to human obligations. As a boy awakening in the temple, as a "convert" consecrating himself at the Jordan, here in the wilderness deciding on his program, and later renewing his purpose at the transfiguration, and surrendering himself in the garden, these experiences involved seeing human need as well as seeing God. Seeing God always meant with Jesus, seeing God's will for men.

Jesus had to decide how he would undertake his work in the face of the sort of Messiah the people expected. It was the old, old temptation to give the people what they wanted, or at least meet them halfway. The Old Testament had set forth several ideals of the coming leader. In Deuteronomy he was presented as a reforming prophet. In Ezekiel he was a priest who should lead the nation in perfect worship of the one true God. In Isaiah he was the suffering servant. In the Psalms he was the coming king who should smite the oppressor, release the nation from bondage, and rule over the peoples of the earth.

In Jesus' day nearly everyone looked for a king. Throughout their history, with but brief breathing spells, the Jews had known repeated foreign oppression. As a boy of about ten years Jesus had seen a Galilean revolt against Rome brutally crushed. Two thousand patriotic



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Galileans had been crucified, some of them doubtless Nazareth youth. The nearby village of Sapphoris had been sacked and burned. From his youth Jesus knew that the popular cry would be for a leader who would make himself king, break the Roman yoke, establish national freedom, and make the rule of the one true God supreme. Anyone who ignored this popular expectation would be doomed to defeat. There could be but one way of crushing Rome. Jesus knew one must become a new Caesar and conquer by force of arms. He saw that it meant matching brute force with greater brute force. Only so could he gain quickly "all the kingdoms of this world." Here in the wilderness he refused the most wicked thing a Jew could do: to commit idolatry, worship another god. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." To ally himself with the god of brute force would be to deny the very nature and will of his Father.

Continuing this method of interpretation, the story says that Jesus faced two other decisions. One was the perennial problem of politicians. Promise prosperity. Proclaim the full dinner pail. Offer the people easy comfort by fulfilling literally the Old Testament promise that they should "sit every man under his vine and fig tree" in unmolested ease, with "none to make them afraid." "Command these stones to be made bread." This Jesus rejected as too limited a program. "Man shall not live by bread alone." Man is more than a physical being with only economic needs to be satisfied.

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The other decision involved winning the crowd by marvels. "Cast thyself down from the temple." The people would expect signs in proof of his mission. Later in his ministry Jesus had to face this demand, "Show us a sign." A stunt worker, he knew, could always be certain of a following of a sort. This Jesus also rejected. It was manifest presumption. "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God."

There is yet another way to look at these decisions. Jesus may have been tempted to use the social forces about him to obtain an inside track to leadership. In the idea of winning "all the kingdoms of this world" may have been the suggestion that by allying himself with the Roman authorities he could at once gain a direct road to world power. The issue underlying, "Command these stones to become bread," may have meant an alliance with the economic overlords to give him an immediate short cut to leadership. The choice to cast oneself "down from the pinnacle of the temple" may have involved his uniting with the chief religious leaders, thus giving him at once the power and prestige of recognized authority.

Whatever may have been the exact ideas of the gospel writers, the basic problem Jesus was facing is clear. How could he best conduct his public ministry to insure the doing of his Father's will? The story infers that the decision was most difficult. It was long before he saw his way clearly, and the struggle exhausted him. "He was with the wild beasts," and "he hungered." But at last Jesus made his decision. With a sense of new power and



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divine approval he left his seclusion and returned to Galilee.

Exactly how he decided to proceed, this wilderness story does not specifically state. Perhaps he was not sure of all that his call involved. But the chapters of the gospel story immediately following make it clear that he knew he "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

These are the recorded opening experiences of Jesus' life—awakening, consecration, decision. Their psychological connections are inevitable and clear. Here, as in certain aspects of Jesus' coming experience at his transfiguration, they can be but partly listed under the title "Jesus as They Remembered Him." For they occurred within the privacies of Jesus' own soul. Of their basic truth there can be no doubt. None ever came to religious leadership and power without passing through these crises of awakening, consecration, and decision.

How soon after returning from his seclusion in some "deserted" place Jesus began his public ministry we cannot tell. But we do know that upon entering his public ministry, Jesus came at once into a new experience.

This was the experience of astounding popularity. Immediately the crowds followed him. They pressed upon him so that he "could not so much as eat." They crowded along the lake shore so that he was forced to "launch out" into the water and preach from a boat. They "thronged" him in the streets. They "gathered together insomuch that they trod upon one another." Women ministered unto

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him; children were given into his arms to fondle and bless; the sick and distressed crowded about him; the wealthy invited him to dine; the multitudes, especially when he was castigating their overlords, "heard him gladly." In his band of disciples he combined fishermen, tax-gatherers, and political revolutionaries. The glow of these days of Jesus' popularity still shines from the gospel pages.

Nothing tests a man like excessive popularity. Like strong wine, it goes to the head. It tempts him to compromise his ideals to hold the universal acclaim. But no flood of acclamation could turn Jesus' head. He knew that popularity is fickle and often a black mark against one's character. It may be the evidence not of one's worth, but of the lack of it. "Woe unto you," he warned, "when all men speak well of you."

Events proved Jesus right. His popularity soon waned. His hard, "impossible" ideals drove many from him. His continued failure to organize a *coup d' état* and overthrow the hated Romans froze the heart of many a patriot. Signs of the end of his popularity were all about him. From the first, the religious leaders had been suspicious; soon they became actively hostile. They accused him of forgiving sins without benefit of priest or sacrifice, of ignoring solemn fasting customs, of breaking the Sabbath, and of welcoming the society of the openly irreligious as social equals. He was plainly in league with the prince of demons.

The crowds also began to forsake him. When he made



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no move to become their king, they began to lose interest. For his ideals of goodness and God they cared but little. The parable of the sower is plain evidence of how few took him seriously. The crowds were mostly hard, stony, weedy ground. "Even his brethren did not believe on him."

Opposition arose also from his immediate disciples. They criticized him freely. They were thunderstruck at his refusal to become king. They were in consternation at his insistence that if things continued, it would mean his martyrdom. "Be it far from thee Lord," Peter insisted; "it shall not come nigh thee." The death of John the Baptist rang for him the sure knell of doom. If men could not endure that golden moon of reform, how could they permit the white shining of the sun of righteousness?

If popularity is a test of character, so is failure. It comes doubly hard after the thrilling excitement of popularity. It raises deep questions regarding one's principles and methods. A little clever compromising here, a bit of smart trimming there, and the tide may return. Jesus was suffering the bitter dregs of rejection and failure. This crisis brought him to his next great experience.

This was the experience of dedication. The way he had carefully chosen in the wilderness after his baptism was failing. If he persisted as he had begun, the rising hostility would drive him straight to martyrdom. He would go the tragic way of John the Baptist. In face of impending failure, what ought he to do?

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Exactly what considerations were in his mind we can only guess. But we can see for ourselves what possible choices lay before him. He could quit and be done with the whole business. Or in flight he might find safety. He could "go to the Gentiles." Among them he might even continue his mission. Or he could compromise. It was useless to expect these misled people, under their heavy oppressors, to give him glad and earnest support immediately. They were like sheep. He must lead them like a gentle shepherd. Or he could continue as he had begun and take the awful consequences. These were the plain choices before him. Which, if any, attracted him we cannot tell. What is certain is that he was experiencing failure and rejection. A new decision had to be made. Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the foothills of Mount Hermon at Caesarea Philippi.

His dedication took place on the slopes of Mount Hermon. We call the experience the "transfiguration." As usual the story is told with high symbolism, and is as much suggestive of religious teaching as biographical fact. As is to be expected, it reflects the exalted faith in Jesus of the first followers, and it echoes the Old Testament transfiguration experience of Moses. But the basic facts are plain. Jesus was seeing clearly, perhaps for the first time, all that was involved in his original decision. He could save his mission only by losing himself.

It became plain to him here on the slopes of Hermon that the old heroes of religion, symbolized by Moses and Elijah, had come to power only through suffering. If he



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was to conquer, Jesus now saw that he also must suffer. The certainty of that suffering took hold of him with terrible reality. To flee, to compromise, to quit, or to continue as he had first decided and take the consequences—these were his possible choices. Again the psychological connection with all the previous experiences is plain. Only after a week of tense meditation and a night of severe wrestling did he decide. He accepted to the full the implications involved in the wilderness decision. He would keep in the way he had begun though it cost him his life.

Immediately there flooded him that rapturous sense of divine approval. Joy and peace shone from his face. So once was Moses lifted up; so later Paul would be transfigured. For transfiguration is the inner shining that comes to all who dedicate themselves to the last full measure of devotion.

It is one thing to dedicate oneself to death in the uncertain by-and-by, but quite another to be willing to die *tomorrow*. In Gethsemane Jesus faced a final surrender. Having determined at his transfiguration to see his purpose through even unto death, Jesus now found his final doom at hand. What began vaguely when a boy in the temple now came to its fruition in the garden.

To die or not to die, that was the issue of Gethsemane. *Tomorrow! On a cross!* Since that distant day of his boyhood when the Galilean revolutionaries had suffered wholesale crucifixion, Jesus had known the meaning of

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a cross. Tomorrow he must be crucified, unless . . . . There were two ways to escape. He could easily slip up over Olivet and flee swiftly down the valley toward the Jordan. It was hardly twenty miles to the river. By daylight he could be somewhere in the hill country "beyond Jordan," forever free. Or perhaps at this last moment God would show him an easier way. Not all the old religious leaders had faced martyrdom.

On the slope of the Mount of Olives Jesus fought it out. Would he go on to make the final sacrifice necessary to consummate his work? The gospel stories are emphatic that it was a terrific battle. Jesus begged to escape the torture. "Let this cup pass," he pleaded. It was a cold night. On the steep, stony hillside, amid the olive trees, under the white light of the bright passover moon, Jesus sweat it out. The gospel Greek pointedly emphasizes the turbulence of the conflict. Instead of saying, as we usually read, that "he fell on the ground and prayed," the Greek very emphatically states that "he went stumbling over the ground." One can still see him in the shadows, his feet tripping among the stones, as he went up and down the hillside praying, "If it be possible, let this cup pass!"

Finally he became certain there was no other choice. He must go on and take the full consequences of that first decision in the wilderness. He must carry to its final issue the choice made upon the slopes of Hermon. Again there came to him the sense of perfect



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quiet and the radiant presence of his Father. Then he stepped forth to meet his captors.

Jesus died in Gethsemane. It is there he gave up his life. He had started out to be the leader of the new Kingdom and had set forth on the road to sacrifice. He had succeeded and failed; he had reconsidered and remained firm. Forever the slope of Olivet is his monument. There he surrendered his spirit. Across the Kedron valley, on an unknown wind-swept knoll outside Jerusalem's walls, the authorities smote his body. But it was in Gethsemane that he laid down his life. His earthly experiences, except for the formalities of his trial and bodily death, were ended.

There in the garden the story closes. The resurrection belongs to no earthly experience. There is no way by which we can tell what it meant to him. It is beyond the range of human analysis. What resurrection meant to Jesus we cannot so much as speculate, for it belongs to another life than ours.

What the experience meant to the disciples, however, is clear. To them, one element in it stood clear. To Jesus as they remembered him and came to believe on him, his resurrection was his victory.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### HIS MIND

*"Have in you this mind"*

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THE GOSPEL RECOLLECTIONS ARE A FULL REVELATION OF THE mind of Jesus. He was a teacher, and teachers are talkers. When a man opens his mouth, his speech reveals him. Jesus' physical form is dim, but his mind can be described without equivocation.

It was a mind subject to the laws and limits of human psychology. Certainly it was a brilliant mind, the mind of a genius. None greater has appeared in history. Yet careful reading of the gospels will show plainly that Jesus as they remembered him had a mind subject to our limitations. He learned as we learn, by patient inquiry and purposeful investigation. Like us, he had to "ask, seek, knock." As a boy of twelve, eager and excited, we discover him in the temple. His mind was afire, and like any bright boy "he was asking questions." He learned, as we do, by inquiry. If Jesus was omniscient, nothing is more certain than that he was never "made flesh and dwelt among us." He could never have



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been touched with the feeling of our mental infirmities. For in life in the flesh, the mind is finite, limited.

Startlingly enough, it is in the very miracle stories, where he is most exalted, that the memory of his mental limitations shows plainest.<sup>1</sup> In one of those narrow, Oriental streets, scarcely wider than a modern city sidewalk, while crowded by the inevitable jam, someone touched him. Seriously he inquired of his disciples, "Who touched my garments?" Not only did he not know, but as their reply indicates his disciples were not surprised that he did not know. "Thou seest this multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?"

Again, surprised by the Gadarene demoniac, Jesus' first word was a request for information. "What is your name?" According to the belief of the ancient East he meant, "What demon has possession of you?" To find out, Jesus was forced to ask. "Why are ye fearful?" was his question amid the Galilean storm. Its purpose may have been to quiet his disciples' fears, but it did not stop there. Jesus wanted to know exactly what terrors had aroused their fears, fears to him so needless.

The feeding of the five thousand begins with the common-sense question, "How many loaves have ye?" Like any good physician, he interrogates the tormented father of the epileptic boy, "How long time is it since this hath come unto him?" On his last journey to Jerusalem, he heard raucous voices behind him. His lagging

<sup>1</sup> See Note III, p. 218.

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disciples were disputing heatedly together. Exactly what were they arguing about? Jesus may have had his suspicions, but he had only one way of learning precisely, and that was by asking them, "What were you arguing about in the way?" In that strange story of the cursed fig tree, a story most probably amended in the memories of his followers, this same need of learning by inquiry stands clear. Across the field stood the fig tree. Did it have any figs? There was but one way to find out. Up to the tree he strode, and found it bare. He had thought there might be figs thereon. He wanted some. But he was mistaken and disappointed.

Jesus' most famous statement of his ignorance unveils his lack of knowledge concerning the future. Of its exact progress he was as much in the dark as we. Of that great Day of the Lord toward which all true Israelites then yearned, he said, "No man knoweth the hour, not even the Son of man." In the Fourth Gospel, where the glory of Jesus is most exalted, this same human ignorance is freely admitted. At the Last Supper, Jesus is forced to ask in surprise, "Hast thou been so long with me, Philip, and yet hast not known me?" Before there could be such an astounding miracle as the raising of Lazarus, Jesus must inquire, "Where have ye laid him?"<sup>2</sup>

It is sometimes asserted that Jesus never asked such questions for his own information. He was but seeking to arouse some desire or sense of need in his listeners. If this is true, many of the questions, like that about

<sup>2</sup> See Note IV, p. 219.



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Lazarus' tomb, become nonsense. Such interpretations make Jesus a sham. *His very praying is his supreme acknowledgment that his mind was humanly limited.* He needed wisdom he did not possess. He went to his Father to receive it. And his Father, who seeth in secret, gave unto him.

Jesus' mind worked with lightning rapidity. As they remembered him, he was never at loss for an answer. Before his inquisitors had finished, his mind had perceived the situation, formulated an answer, and organized the necessary vocabulary into keen, adequate sentences.

It was this speed of his mind, as much as his invincible argument, that crushed his opponents. "Teacher, is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?" Jesus' enemies had labored long to devise, as they supposed, a perfect trap. If he said "yes," Jesus would classify himself with renegade Jews who for personal gain justified the Roman rule. That would lose him all influence with the patriotic multitudes. If he said "no," he would be arrested on the charge of inciting to rebellion. If he refused to answer, he could be accused before the people of failure to denounce the heathen despoilers and charged before the Romans with willingness to evade lawful taxes. One can see the knowing smiles of his tormentors as they sprang the catch: "Shall we give, or shall we not give?" To their consternation, with the speed of light came his devastating demand, "Show me a penny!"

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Why they had not long before learned their lesson is a puzzle. The quick flash of his rapier mind had often stabbed their inflated hopes. Once they tried to ruin him by spreading the rumor that he was in league with demons. That, they felt sure, was how he did his marvelous works. "He had Beelzebub!" He could cast out demons because he was secretly allied with demons. If that idea could be instilled into the populace, they would flee from him. For who could tell when his kindness would turn to wrath and the demons he had driven out would be called back a hundredfold? Thus his enemies sowed the rumors abroad. Finally, they accused him openly. "By the prince of demons he casteth out demons." To their consternation his answer fell off his tongue almost before they had finished speaking. "How can Satan cast out Satan?" "If Satan hath risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but is at an end." The reply was unanswerable, and its speed added to its devastation.

Wherever one turns in the gospels, this swiftness of mind is remembered. It is as prevalent in John as in the Synoptics. One can see them sitting out on the roof in the evening, the young Jesus and the aging Nicodemus. Over them silently slip the steady stars, and about them fan the evening breezes. To Nicodemus' quiet and polite, "We know thou art a teacher come from God," Jesus shot back the unexpected challenge, "Ye must be born anew." The old man was half stunned, as the story plainly indicates, at the unexpected and swift retort of the



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young teacher. Its unexpected direction and speed left the honored member of the Sanhedrin gasping, "How?"

The remarkable thing about Jesus' swift retorts is their depth of thought. They are more than scintillations of wit. They are winged shafts weighted with profound meaning. A quick wit may dwell in a shallow mind. An agile bit of repartee may be lighter in content than a feather. But the flying answers of Jesus as they remembered them were as remarkable for their weight of thought as for their speed. In the midst of the give and take of bitter controversy, one group of officers sent to arrest him returned empty handed. When challenged, "Why did ye not bring him?" they paid Jesus the everlasting tribute, "Never man so spake."

Jesus' mind, then, was not merely swift; it was profound. Let no one be intimidated by that word profound. It does not refer to obscure ideas set forth in complex sentences, constructed from a polysyllabic vocabulary. Nor does it mean thought difficult to comprehend. Profound thought is no more than the simple setting forth of a vital idea which is of large consequence to life. "The earth moves"—three syllables of thirteen letters. But this discovery by Galileo, simply as it can be stated and explained, turned our understanding of the universe inside out. "God is love"—three syllables of only nine letters. But they represent the most penetrating insight into the character of God that has been revealed to man. A deep mind, then, is not a muddy mind. It is a mind

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able to grapple with vital matters of universal importance to life, until it sees them clearly, accurately, completely, simply.

This profound thinking is well illustrated in Jesus' praying. For prayer with Jesus was prolonged, concentrated, consecrated thinking. His night vigils were prayer-thinking, or thinking-prayers. The character of Jesus as they remembered him in the materials which Luke carefully gathered convinced him that Jesus never faced anything important without first entering into a long period of prayer-thinking. The night before the twelve were chosen he spent in prayer. His deep mind focused its intense attention on the plain qualifications and latent possibilities of his many friends. They were chosen only after they had passed Jesus' most careful scrutiny.

This profundity of mind is richly demonstrated in Jesus' teachings. He was accused one day of acquiescing in his disciples' breaking the Sabbath. He had not rebuked them for reaping grain with their hands and threshing it in their palms. His accusers expected him to justify himself from the Scriptures. Jesus turned, not to the Law with its complicated regulations, but to an obscure tale from the life of David. David, the Lord's anointed, had once "violated" the law concerning the presence bread. After consecration on the altar, it was reserved for priests only. Others could not partake of it. But David, fleeing from the wrath of Saul, entered the shrine at Nob, seized the bread, and shared it with his



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hungry men. If that law could be suspended in the emergency of a severe human need, Jesus suggested, so could Sabbath laws. In this simple story Jesus discovered the clue to a far-reaching truth. The ultimate purpose of all customs and institutions is the assistance of human good. "The Sabbath was made for man." This word has become a magna charta, lifting from men the dead hand of institutionalism.

This profound working of Jesus' mind is seen with startling clarity in his declarations concerning the resurrection. The Sadducees did not believe in it. They had a stock story guaranteed to make such a believer the laughing stock of his hearers and rout him in a gale of jeers. This story was based upon the old levirate law that if a man died and left no heir, one of his brothers should espouse the widow and their issue should be counted as the dead man's heir. Well, there were once seven brothers. One married and died without issue. In turn, each brother married the widow. All died, leaving no heir. Finally, this poor sevenfold widow died. Now, asked the Sadducees in mockery, "In the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife?" One can see the crude, coarse humor in the Sadducees' minds. At long last this oft-widowed widow enters the pearly gates. Seven husbands stand waiting to claim her. "She's mine!" they clamor in concert. "But I had her first!" "Nay, she's mine, I had her longest." "In truth, she's mine, I had her last." With a wink and a chuckle at their gullible opponent's discomfiture, the Sad-

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ducees waited for an answer that never came. Amid the guffaws of the bystanders, their victims retired in confusion.

But they sprang this joke once too often. They tried it on Jesus. Swift and straight came his answer, weighted with eternal import. First, he charged the Sadducees with colossal ignorance. They "did not know the scriptures." Not that the Old Testament contains any concrete arguments for immortality. It does something deeper. It pictures the growing conviction of the supreme worth and mystery of life. It tells the long story of man's struggle with good and evil. It relates the difficulties and progress of his journey toward God. It details the unquenchable desire of God to save him. To Jesus, these things permitted but one conclusion: Man is something too valuable to be lost forever by death.

Next, he said, the Sadducees did not know "the power of God." They conceived life as limited by their own little experiences. In their little logic, what they had never seen or known could not be true. But Jesus asserted that all great questions are to be measured and answered, not by man's finiteness, but by the vast power of God. The possibilities of immortality are not a matter of man's temporary experiences, but of the immeasurable power of God.

Furthermore, these Sadducean disbelievers misconceived the whole nature of the risen life. They thought it to be but a renewal of bodily functions. All the old physical relations would be resumed. But Jesus knew better.



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"They are as the angels," he declared. Immortality is not mere physical renewal, but a new kind of life. Exactly what this involves, Jesus does not state. It is enough to know that it is a new kind of life, glorious "as the angels."

Worst of all, the Sadducees had failed to grasp the true nature of God. "He is not the God of the dead," replied Jesus, "but of the living." The relation between Abraham and God, Jesus declared in effect, was personal and initiated by God himself. Nothing could be more absurd than to suppose that God, having sought a man's devotion and given him his affection in return, would sit back and coldly allow him to be cut off forever by the incident of death. Even human beings, sinful as they are, are better than that. They do not let any loved one go as long as they can prevent it. If we mortals love on with unquenchable affection after years of final separation, how much more will the eternal God preserve in living fellowship those upon whom he has bestowed his unfailing care?

There can be no higher tribute to the swift profundity of Jesus' mind than that out of this silly Sadducean tale he wrung such eternal truth. It is no wonder that Luke says that certain scribes exclaimed, "Teacher, thou hast answered well"; and that in the face of such intellectual acumen, "they durst not any more ask him any question."

Probably no memory of Jesus as they knew him shows his depth of mind as do the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. Taken separately, there is nothing original or startling in them. They have formed parts even of pagan prayers. But out of the hundreds of common requests constantly

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rising to heaven, the selection of just these five is amazing. Only a genius could boil down prayer to less than half a dozen all-inclusive necessities. The prayer begins with a glowing ascription to the Eternal Spirit as close, tender, personal—"Father." It proceeds in humble reverence—"Hallowed be thy name." It continues with an act that surrenders all desire and activity to the divine purpose—"Thy kingdom come." Now, only, is the praying heart prepared to present its own petitions. Jesus limits them to three: for necessities, "Give us day by day our daily bread"; for moral cleansing, "Forgive us our sins"; and for protection from unsuspected evils, lurking to destroy, "Bring us not into temptation." Most unexpectedly the whole prayer is cast in the plural. A private prayer is never to be merely private. When a man enters into his closet to pray to his Father in secret, he must not forget the *brotherhood* of prayer. "When ye pray, say, "Our . . . us." Jesus' intense mind circumscribed the whole divine-human fellowship of prayer, with its outreaching toward the needs of all men, in five brief statements, in English, of but twenty-seven words! <sup>3</sup> It is no wonder that in the presence of such intellectual power, even the thoughtless multitudes were astonished at his teaching.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Luke's version, omitting the explanatory plea in the fourth part, "For we ourselves also forgive," etc.

<sup>4</sup> This profundity of mind is further developed from a different angle in the chapter on "His Perfection," in the section on his perfect understanding of life, pages 172-179.



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They remembered Jesus, too, as having an understanding mind. He possessed an extraordinary capacity to catch the viewpoint of others. Genius is usually impatient with lesser minds. It cannot tolerate their blundering gropings. Why others are so dull, it cannot comprehend. But it was quite otherwise with Jesus. He could appreciate both the slow of heart and slack of thought.

It was Passover time. Jesus and his disciples were journeying south through Samaria to the Holy City. It was nightfall and swift darkness was coming on. At an unknown village they sought lodgings. But the Samaritans, who were worshipers at the temple on nearby Gerizim, were resentful of Jewish pilgrims who passed through their country to attend the festival at the rival temple on Zion. They therefore refused lodgings. The disciples were shocked. In the ancient East inns were none too common. To sleep out was always uncomfortable and often unsafe. It was a universal law that whoever requested sleeping quarters must be accommodated. But the bigoted Samaritans closed their doors. The disciples were furious. "Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" They felt this would be exactly the penalty this lack of plain decency deserved.

But Jesus' sympathetic mind understood the Samaritan wrath. He comprehended the long centuries of hostility, wherein Samaritan scorned Jew and Jew cursed Samaritan. He knew that the Samaritans merited rebuke. But their inhospitable spirit was kindness itself when com-

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pared with the murderous suggestion of James and John. So the rebuke went to these "Sons of Thunder": "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of . . . . They went to another village."

At no place is this sympathetic mind of Jesus shown more graciously than in his dealing with wayward women. He treated them with the same respectful courtesy that he would have given his mother or his sisters. Before him, they found themselves to be gentlewomen. He never let himself be fooled. They knew he perceived what manner of creatures they were. Yet from him came no scorn, and no direct rebuke. Always he approached them with the same high respect others accorded only true gentlewomen. These women were read and known of all men. They knew what to expect from men: from the pious, snubs and scorn; from the lewd, ribald jokes; from the lascivious, demands for physical satisfaction; and from their respectable sisters, cruel gossip. Then they faced this strange, clean man. Though he knew all, there were no insinuations, no contempt, no sly smiles. Jesus saw that under their bizarre manner they longed for true womanhood. While in his presence, they were again gentlewomen.

It was because of this that the "woman who was a sinner" risked public censure at Simon the Pharisee's banquet. For there reclined one whose understanding would restore her integrity and purity. One can see her leaving the house clear-eyed and content. "Thy faith hath saved thee." But it was a faith born of his sym-



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pathetic mind. No wonder the woman at the well exclaimed, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did." He had not only probed her marital entanglements; he had understood her wistful desire for honorable womanhood.

This understanding quality in Jesus' mind is seen in John's gospel as Jesus stands before Pilate. The Roman procurator was caught in a situation not of his own choosing. The charges, trumped up, compelled him to try the prisoner. The hot animosities and drastic threats of Jesus' accusers made acquittal difficult. If he did not condemn the accused, they threatened to secure his removal from office. Pilate's position and career were in the balance. He hesitated. Though tired, cold, mocked, beaten, Jesus understood the plight of his judge. He did not charge Pilate with vacillation and cowardice. Quietly he said to the tormented man, "He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." Such unexpected understanding surprised the hard-boiled Roman. It put temporary courage into his spine. "Upon this Pilate sought to release him."

So the pictures multiply. Whether calling Peter to discipleship in phrases quick to catch a fisherman's loyalty, or handing the sop to Judas at the Last Supper, thereby making him the honored guest of the evening, the sympathetic mind of Jesus never failed. Long years after they remembered and wrote, "All were amazed at his understanding."

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Finally, Jesus had a radical mind. Indeed, it was revolutionary. It was the most upsetting mind the world has experienced. It is customary to think of religious leaders as arch-conservatives and religion as the opiate of the people. But from Amos to Kagawa, religion has bred the world's most daring radicals. Among them, Jesus stands without a peer.

His daring mind spread consternation among the thinkers of his day. None of his generation had dared to lay hands on the Law. Yet this young rabbi boldly began to revise Moses. To them, it seemed as foolish as an attempt to change the multiplication table. It was worse; it was blasphemous. The young teacher was saying, "Ye have heard that it was said of old time . . . but I say unto you" something quite different. Jesus demanded higher religion. Moses was not enough. He limited vengeance, restricting it to "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But Jesus forbade all retaliation, allowing only the vengeance of an active, unlimited kindness. "Give to every one that asketh thee." Moses had insisted that oaths in the name of Deity were inviolable. Jesus forbade any oath to secure one's honesty. "Let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of evil intent." The exploring mind of Jesus had ventured out to the farthest frontier of moral endeavor.

He set aside food taboos. All religions have fallen into the fallacy of enforcing prohibitions that cannot be defended on purely moral grounds. They may censure



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anything, from saluting the flag to playing cards, from wearing clothes with buttons to eating pork. It was this latter among the Jews that Jesus set aside. "There is nothing from without the man that goeth into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of him are those that defile the man." At once the prohibition of a millennium was ended. Following the prophets and some of the psalmists, Jesus made defilement not a matter of external practice, but of inner motive and will.

Jesus' radical mind saw all men as possible sons of the Father. It is a trite commonplace with us in theory. But it was not even a theory with the ancient Jews. Jesus shocked his Nazarene neighbors with their own Scriptures. "There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah . . . . and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zerepath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed but only Naaman, the Syrian." So pork-eating, uncircumcised idolaters could become sons of the Father! "Ye shall be sons of the Most High." How? Just by being "merciful even as your father is merciful." "Ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." How? "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father." No circumcision, no sacrifices, no food taboos. Only the practice of the Father's good will is required. No race, people, or creed can have a corner on that. It is open to all men.

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Nowhere is Jesus' radical-mindedness so revolutionary as in the Lord's Prayer. "Thy kingdom come," is the world's most drastic sentence. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," is its equally radical companion. Here is a plea to the Most High himself to intervene, that earth's sinful society become "as it is in heaven." It announces God, himself, as the Divine Revolutionary. Beside this prayer, human reforms and programs become reactionary. It seeks to bring men, here and now, into an experience of the beauty, serenity, and joy of Paradise. Imagination and thinking can go no further. The radical mind of Jesus perceived the only complete revolution possible among men—the will of God on earth.

It will not be surprising to find that history's greatest thinker demanded that his followers sweat their minds. Jesus as they remembered him constantly demanded, "What think ye?" They recalled that he began his ministry by calling men to new thinking. "Repent ye! Repent ye!" in the Greek means, "Change your minds! Change your minds!" Only as he could get new thinking could he make new men. His teachings are full of injunctions to exercise one's mind. As the parable of the unfinished tower with its "first sit down and count the cost" implies, one must think thoroughly before acting. "Consider the lilies of the field," commands the worried to do some long, quiet thinking.

"You knew, did you?" is the condemnation passed on the one-talent man. He had never considered the signifi-



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cance of his knowledge and it sealed his doom. Jesus' most exacting demand for high thinking came in his rebuke to Peter. "Thou mindest not the things of God." Jesus challenged poor, finite human minds to think like God. With him, active thinking was a first requirement in true religion. God expected not only loving devotion, but intelligent understanding. Upon his followers and at the heart of the "first and great commandment," he put the injunction, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind."

## CHAPTER SIX

### HIS EMOTIONS

*"He was moved with compassion"*

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HOW ONE FEELS ABOUT LIFE IS OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE. FOR feeling is essential to action—so much so that many never act except under the impulse of their feelings. Knowledge gives wisdom to action, but it is feeling that impels one into doing. If we are to comprehend Jesus' actions, we must understand his emotions.

Jesus as they remembered him was rich in emotions. The gospels picture him as moved by the whole variety of feelings common to all. Excitement, bewilderment, joy, anger, compassion, grief, love, disappointment, loneliness, humor, annoyance; so the list runs on. It goes the whole gamut, from quiet moods to strongest emotions of volcanic power. Like ours, most of Jesus' moods merit little special mention. Like us, Jesus was impelled by but few inciting emotions.

Two emotions Jesus is represented as never having experienced, fear and personal hate. When we consider how deeply they are imbedded at the very center of our



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feelings, their absence in Jesus is inexplicable. He was the one man who was truly fearless. The furies of nature could not upset him. Although his lake-wise disciples were in alarm as the night storm raged about their boat, he slept on "in the stern on a cushion." Nor could the chicanery of men frighten him. His worst enemies realized it and attempted to flatter him with it. "We know thou carest not for anyone; for thou regardest not the person of men." Possible disaster and threat of want could not make him blanch. When his disciples became fearful, he cried, "Fear not: ye are of more value than many sparrows."

To be sure, he suffered from dark forebodings. While the cross was yet afar off, he sighed, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" The thought of the crucifixion terrors threw him into paroxysms of dread. "Father, all things are possible, remove this cup from me." But Jesus' shrinking from a cruel martyrdom paralyzed neither his thought nor his action. He found it difficult to understand why others feared. Of his alarmed disciples, waking him in the storm, he could only ask, "Why are ye fearful?"

Nor was he subject to any personal hate. Anger he knew, and hot indignation. He could speak words of scathing rebuke, but he never uttered a syllable of personal hate. If one attacked him, he kept his poise. But if someone attempted to injure the helpless or needy, his

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wrath ignited. At such times they remembered "he looked round about on them with anger," but never with hate.

With the exception, then, of these two primitive and driving emotions, fear and hate, Jesus was moved by the same feelings that compel us all. To understand him we must study them.

Jesus was electric with emotional power. Everywhere he appeared, things became tumultuous. Poise, calmness, serenity, and peace have truthfully been proclaimed of him. Nothing could throw him off balance. But that is only half the picture. Jesus' life was an intoxicating experience.

This intoxication with life cannot be ascribed to the effervescence of his young animal spirits. Long before he entered his ministry, his years in the carpenter shop, squatting on the floor, laboriously toiling in the slow hand-labor of the day, would have quenched his fire had it not been fed with the tinder of his own turbulent emotions. Had his joyous passion for life been merely the product of youth and a good digestion, the bitter blows of his missionary tours would soon have quenched his enthusiasm. Misunderstanding, opposition, slander, intrigues, hatred, and threats would soon have cured any fanciful notion that life was jolly easy. The roots of Jesus' thrill in living went deeper than his nervous system. They sprang from the unquenchable sparkle of his inmost spirit.

According to the gospel memories Jesus never found



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life dull. The emotion of excitement abounds throughout his mature years. We read the gospels intermittently, quietly, even dully. But in reality they fairly shout with excitement. People clamor; men run about; crowds gather; the needy cry aloud; listeners are amazed; astonishing things happen. At the center of this excitement and always its cause is the exciting Jesus.

When he called a disciple he did so by promising greater excitement. "Come ye after me and I will make you to become fishers of men." No more stirring offer could have been made to a fisherman. Jesus offered a new kind of fish, more, larger, and vastly harder to catch. To Peter it was the lure of irresistible excitement. He "straightway left the nets and followed him."

When Jesus told a parable, it too was electrifying. It might be the briefest of stories containing hardly a score of words, but it was always thrilling. A jewel merchant was "seeking goodly pearls." One can see him eagerly searching, scrutinizing, and at last finding the perfect pearl. What joy! What exhilaration! "He went and sold all that he had and bought it." A woman had lost a single coin. Although she had nine others, the missing one must be found. She looked about but could not see it. She lit her lamp, but could not discover it. She got her broom. Into every corner she swept "until she finds it." Thrilled until she could not contain herself, she startled the town with the news. "She calleth together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me."

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Too often we miss the full impact of Jesus' sayings because we fail to catch this mood of excitement in his teachings. "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye would say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou uprooted and be thou planted in the sea; and it would obey you." Imagine that! "Up tree!" and instantly, to the unbelieving astonishment of everyone, the tree tears itself, roots and all, out of the soil. "Be thou planted in the sea." Off it sails to plant itself in the sea, where it continues growing. How delicious and exciting in its ridiculous absurdity! Everywhere in the words of Jesus this excitement reigns. There are banquets, harvests, treasure troves, hypocrites on parade, kings setting out to battle, and demons on the warpath—exciting matters always.

In dealing with a would-be disciple, Jesus was equally exciting. For the rich young ruler he had five adventurous verbs, "Go, sell, give, come, follow!" Here is the offer of an exciting poverty to begin at once. To one used to the soft comfort of a cushioned couch, accustomed to regular, ample meals, dependent upon servants and slaves, the simple life with him who had "not where to lay his head" would have furnished excitement indeed.

Or look at Zacchaeus after he scrambled down his tree and hurried off to make ready for Jesus' arrival. As the meal progressed he became more and more excited. Suddenly he leaped from his couch and "stood." So the gospel remembers it. "Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore it fourfold." This was the most expensive



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dinner on record. It cost the host fifty per cent of his wealth in outright charity, and four hundred per cent in restitution. Zacchaeus became intoxicated by the presence of the exciting Jesus.

This central emotion of Jesus was contagious. When the news began spreading that the Kingdom was at hand, the multitudes came running together. Levi was infected by it as he was "sitting at the place of toll." He left his tax-stand forever and in celebration made a great dinner. The Samaritan woman was astonished by Jesus' offer of "living water." In her excitement she "forgot her water pot." Mary sat enwrapped at her Master's feet; the religious leaders were aroused to malicious opposition; children came at his call. Whoever met Jesus caught the pulse of his excitement. When men heard him speak, they "were astonished." When they beheld his deeds, they were amazed, saying, "We have seen strange things to-day." Years later the writer of the Fourth Gospel, himself imbued with this man's exhilarating spirit, summed it up in one noble sentence, "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it to the full."

"He was moved with compassion." This is another leading emotion of Jesus as they remembered him. It has been caricatured into flaccid sentimentality, devoid of discrimination and strength. Nevertheless, it must be discussed if one is honest with Jesus' impelling emotions.

In reality compassion is a wide virtue. It is more than a kindly understanding for another's troubles or pain. It

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is an inward suffering with another as he suffers, just because he suffers. Is his body racked with pain? So, too, in a real way, does one having compassion suffer in sympathy. Has bitter disappointment come? To the compassionate one, the darkness of another's life comes like a deep shadow. Is a loved one gone? Then is the one having compassion filled with a haunting loneliness. Compassion feels within itself all the pain, the misfortune, the bewildered emotions of others.

This was the compassion of Jesus as they remembered him. Seen within the harsh setting of his time, his unflagging loving-kindness is amazing. His day was not devoid of the milk of human kindness. Men were tender to the sick, kindly to the dying, and dutiful to the unfortunate; yet theirs was a pitifully limited compassion. Little could be done toward relieving serious illness, and when little can be done men become callous. With the sick everywhere, even out of doors, and men helpless in their presence, the springs of compassion dry up. This seeming hard-heartedness, growing out of the harsh necessities of life, flowed over into religion. The sick could receive no comforting ministrations on the holy Sabbath. Only if death threatened might aid be given, sufficient to keep life unto the morrow. Though the sick suffer, let the Sabbath be kept! The religious leaders who enforced such teachings were not callous above other men. But the universal helpless cruelty of life dried up their fountains of mercy.

Upon this chilly background of smothered pity, the



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radiant compassion of Jesus shines with healing warmth. Into that hard, helpless world he came, "moved with compassion." It bubbled spontaneously from his heart, like living water. It was available for the asking. "As he passed by," "as he passed by," it is repeated, his compassion reached to leper, publican, cripple, and sinner. Even the sight of the jostling mob moved him. "The crowd is a beast," so it has been written. But not with Jesus. "When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion, for they were as sheep having no shepherd." His compassion was spontaneous, and the unending tragedies of life could neither quench nor exhaust it.

His compassion was not only spontaneous; it was continual. He ministered without restriction wherever and whenever suffering required. He "broke" the Sabbath. He even upset the orderly regularity of synagogue services to give full reign to the movings of his compassion. Everywhere people rejoiced. At last somebody cared, deeply, spontaneously—cared with the healing balm of a divine mercy.

Moreover, Jesus' compassion knew no arbitrary limitations. We are familiar with compassion that feels and acts occasionally. It confines itself to family and friends. It keeps itself to its class and status, expends itself only on those it likes, or who are undergoing experiences that itself has endured. Not so the compassion of Jesus. It ranged over the whole area of life. It reached down into childhood and out into the world of God's humbler creatures. "Suffer the little children to come unto me." "Not

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a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's notice."

This rich variety of his compassion is shown as much in his parables as in his actions. His parables reveal his sympathetic, universal compassion. There is compassion for poverty in the parable of the lost coin, compassion for agricultural toil in the lost crops in the parables of the sower and of the tares, compassion for the tragedies of sheep herding in the parable of the lost sheep, compassion for disasters that strike homes or for the final retribution that overwhelms careless living in the parable of the two builders, compassion for grieving fathers in the parable of the prodigal son, compassion for wanton living again in the same story, compassion for poverty aggravated by illness in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and compassion for the wasted or useless life in the parable of the pounds. In his parables Jesus most richly shows how deeply every tragedy of life had entered into him. His was a universal compassion.

His compassion as they remembered him never stood coldly by in the face of any harsh experience. The woman in his parable desperately sweeping for her lost coin "until she finds it," and the widow at the temple treasury casting in her two mites which were "all her living," measure the pulse beat of his compassion for the poor.<sup>1</sup> Long after it was remembered that he had once, as the climax of a description of his purpose and mission, declared, "The poor have the gospel preached unto them."

<sup>1</sup> See Note V, p. 219.



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His exhaustless sympathy for toiling workers speaks in the petulant plea of the disappointed laborers in the vineyard, who had borne "the heat and burden of the day." It breathes in his tender, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden." It may well be that here the gospel writer was thinking of ecclesiastical burdens, but the figure was born of Jesus' compassion for the human burden bearers about him. "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

This universal compassion of Jesus reached beyond the physical sufferings of life. It gave itself to sorrows, failures, and sins. Meeting the little funeral at Nain, Jesus was overcome by the triple tragedy, "One dead, the only son of his mother and she was a widow." Before the grave of Lazarus, as Moffatt so vividly and correctly phrases it, "Jesus burst into tears." However one may feel about the miracles of raising the dead, the memory is plain that Jesus never remained unmoved in the presence of sorrow and death.

Nor was he unconcerned in the face of defeat, cowardice, and failure. They did not anger him; they hurt him. When the rich young ruler "went away sorrowful," Jesus was deeply grieved. Looking after the retreating man, he sighed, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God." Peter's disastrous denial on the night of Jesus' trial brought no cutting rebuke. Instead, in sorrowful compassion "Jesus looked." In that merciful glance was Peter's salvation.

Even the irreligious won the loving compassion of Je-

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sus. He was a friend of publicans and sinners. Respectable people passed them by on the other side, but Jesus ate with them. In parables like that of the prodigal son, this universal compassion shines. "He wasted his substance . . . he began to be in want . . . would fain have filled his belly with the husks." A Jew become a swineherd, a son of Abraham feeding pigs! For his unspeakable degradation, Jesus had neither contempt, scorn, nor rebuke; only a divine pity.

Such was the spontaneous, wide-reaching compassion of Jesus, shining like a warm universal sun without hindrance or prejudice on the chill of the compassionless world. Like the mercy of the Heavenly Father himself, it shone on the just and the unjust, on the good and the evil alike. Like the grace of God, it was the beginning of the salvation of men. All his life, Jesus suffered for men. His whole life was a vicarious giving out of his universal compassion. And at last it was gathered together in one final agony, the compassion of the Cross.

Now let us turn to a far different emotion. Let us look at the anger of Jesus. Interpreters of Jesus are usually afraid of it. Preachers sidestep it, lest it be inferred that Jesus "got mad." Theologians skirt it lest it seem to buttress the validity of a vindictive God. Translators and exegetes dilute it as too strong to stomach. Psychologists wave a red light before it, warning that anger blinds the vision and sears the heart. But we shall have to face it. Jesus as they remembered him was capable of great heat. The



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gospels are full of strong words. Jesus "rebuked" them; he "strictly charged" them; he "looked round on them in anger." There is no circumventing these phrases. Not all of them suggest anger, but they obliterate the saccharine "meek and mild" Jesus. Humble Jesus was, and approachable, helpful, and gentle; but never spineless. He could be "moved with indignation." The memories of Jesus put it bluntly and without apology, "He looked round about on them in anger."

The reason we are slow to accept Jesus' anger is that we distrust our own. Ours is usually personal, vindictive, and even malicious. It is rarely aroused except when we are personally offended. In offenses against others too often we have little interest or care. So when it is written that Jesus became angry, we leap to the conclusion that his anger was as our anger, and we emasculate the word. Such a memory, we feel, cannot be correct. But a bit of study will show that Jesus' anger was not our anger. His anger was without malice and was never personal. Though Jesus blazed out in indignation, he never permitted his emotions to unbalance his critical faculties or becloud his vision. As a later disciple comprehended, there was nought blinding, spiteful, or personal in his wrath. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again."

It was the wrongs done against others that angered Jesus. He could not abide offenses against children. "Whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believeth on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he

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should be sunk in the depths of the sea." As that memory stands, it is apparently new believers, even adults not yet firm in the faith, whom the gospel writer has in mind. If so, Jesus' anger here shows in a double light. He could never have used a figure coupling the welfare of children with a suggestion of suicide or execution had he not been aroused by seeing helpless childhood suffering needlessly. The picture also suggests that any attempts to undermine the moral resolution of new believers, yet weak in their faith, set Jesus aflame.

Likewise, spinning ecclesiastical red tape until religion became confusing to the simple and earnest, preventing help to the needy and suffering, shackling the Sabbath with binding rules, and circumventing parental obligations with the hypocrisy of "corban"—such fairly infuriated Jesus. "Ye load men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye touch not the burdens with one of your fingers." "Full well do ye reject the commandment of God." "Hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes so, ye make him two-fold more a son of Gehenna than yourselves." No description of Jesus' emotional life as they remembered it is complete that tones down his controlled but hot rage whenever he saw the helpless or the innocent foiled or injured.

Any taking advantage of the unfortunate inflamed Jesus' ire. To "devour widows' houses" by foreclosure, leaving defenseless women paupers upon the streets and possibly driven into immorality, merited the punishment of



### *JESUS AS THEY REMEMBERED HIM*

hell. To resort to "extortion and wickedness," then leave "undone the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith," was to "strain out the gnat and swallow the camel." These self-aggrandizing schemes, if attempted under the guise of religion, provoked Jesus to even greater heat. "Ye love the chief seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the market places." It was the temple traffic in sacrifices and money-changing that incited his bitterest blast. To see earnest pilgrims, after years of skimping, come the long, difficult journey to the Holy City only to be systematically cheated in the name of religion filled him with fury. He drove out the dealers in sheep, goats, and doves, and the money-changers. "Take these things hence." He turned the temple court into pandemonium. "My Father's house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of robbers." The chief priests and scribes, when they heard it, "sought how they might destroy him." It was Jesus' white, impassioned anger, ignited by the injustice of a self-aggrandizing religion, that sealed his final doom.

Finally, let us consider Jesus' emotion of radiant joy. For Jesus as they remembered him was moved by a sparkling radiance. Joy bubbled in him. It was as irrepressible as his excitement, as strong as his compassion, and as passionate as his anger. He has been cartooned as a "pale Galilean." It has been seriously asked whether he ever smiled or laughed. Sorrows he had, the sharpest in history, but Jesus was never a mournful or grieving

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spirit. Only twice is he said to have wept, at Lazarus' grave and over Jerusalem. These tears issued from the fountains of his compassion, not from springs of moroseness or moodiness. A man who could call a happy-go-lucky child from his playfellows in the marketplace and get him to serve before grown-ups as an example of citizenship in the Kingdom of God was plainly no pickle-face. A rabbi who salted his teachings with incongruous pictures of men gathering figs from thistles, and of a herdsman casting pearls before swine, was no dessicated pedant. Here, plainly, as they remembered him, was a man whose emotion was perpetual joy.

His joy in social life has become proverbial. As his earliest followers remembered him, he was a perpetual diner-out. He delighted in feasts, relished banquets, and rejoiced in social talk. Again and again it is written of him, "He went into the house of one . . . to eat bread." "And it came to pass that he was sitting at meat." Feasting was the acme of Oriental pleasures. At such times there was not only good food; there was often "music and dancing" and men "began to be merry." This fondness for social occasions bubbled over into Jesus' parables. "A certain man made a great supper." "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king who made a marriage feast." Even though he knew the danger of having one's "heart overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness," he was easily society's most sought-after dinner guest. Crabbed men with dyspeptic digestions, tombstone faces, and lugubrious conversation do not re-



### *JESUS AS THEY REMEMBERED HIM*

ceive invitations to dine. It is plain that Jesus' presence curdled no appetites, although he could on occasion converse seriously or rebuke sharply even at banquets. He earned for himself a reputation among the strait-laced as being too gay to be good. No one, they thought, could be as happy as he and be deeply religious. He was, they said, "a glutton and a winebibber."

Jesus found an equal joy in his work. The memories that remain of him are riddled with his troubles, his disappointments, and his set-backs. They are frank about his temptations, forebodings, and uncertainties. But they are equally certain of his moods of joy. "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven. . . . In that same hour he rejoiced." Both accounts of the Sermon on the Mount, with all their differences, state that Jesus began with a summons to joy. "Happy are the poor . . . happy are they that mourn . . . happy are the gentle," so Matthew begins. Here is a joy so powerful that it could grow in the most barren circumstances. "Happy are ye when men shall persecute you . . . rejoice and be exceeding glad."

Even Jesus' religion was rich in the emotion of joy. He proclaimed the ancient and awful Jahweh as "Abba"—"your Father"—opening the way for glad fellowship and radiant service to men. He set forth the Kingdom as new wine. Wine was the ancient symbol of joy. "Wine that maketh glad the heart of man," sang an old psalmist. An old Jewish proverb declares, "Where there is no wine there is no joy."

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As they remembered him, Jesus was eager that all men should experience his emotion of perpetual, unquenchable joy. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." So the writer of the Fourth Gospel climaxes his story. The last glimpse of Jesus among his bewildered disciples shows him offering them his own inner gladness, "That your joy may be full." In the closing memories of Matthew, in the parable of the great judgment, Jesus, in whom joy was so impelling an emotion, stands in eternal invitation: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### HIS MOTIVES

*"Not my will, but thine, be done"*

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THE PROBING OF JESUS' MOTIVES IS NO SIMPLE TASK. Indeed the dissection of anyone's inner incentives is usually a precarious task. The reasons are clear. Men do not usually declare their deepest impulses. Often they do not recognize their true impulsions. They have never analyzed their inner intentions. Moreover, their motives are frequently mixed. Certain of them may be noble, others innocuously personal, and some may be very selfish. Usually this confusion is unrecognized. Also, motives change. They may grow, or they may backslide. They may begin on the low level of personal desire and rise to an amazing nobility. Or they may commence with apparently honorable purposes and degenerate into seeking ignoble ends.

The hardest matter for an investigator, searching the documents, is to discover and prove his subject's real motives. What he did is reasonably clear, but why he did it is often blanketed in rationalization. Further, every person of importance has his detractors, and even slanderers, who

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impugn his motives. This makes it the more difficult to evaluate his true incentives.

Since motives are a key to character, probe Jesus' motives we must. For, as Browning states it, "Incentives come from the soul's self."<sup>1</sup> Jesus himself put motives basic in his judgment of men. With him, it was no longer, "Thou shalt not kill," but, "Thou shalt not hate." "But I say unto you that everyone that is angry with his brother shall be in danger of judgment." It was not merely overt adultery that was wrong, but also the immoral gaze. "Everyone that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already with her in his heart." It was not enough to be meticulously fastidious in observing fasts, prayers, and sacrifices. One must know the inner glory of religion as a joyous affection. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . and thy neighbor as thyself."

Like others, Jesus was reticent about his motives. Statements by himself are very few. Even these were denied by many of the "best" people of his day. Were his motives what he said they were? Were they those ascribed to him by others? For our answers, we are limited to a half dozen or so plainly reliable statements. This is little enough, but fortunately it is ample.

"The Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." That was the burning motive of Jesus

<sup>1</sup> "Andrea del Sarto."



### *JESUS AS THEY REMEMBERED HIM*

as they remembered him. The first disciples could never fully comprehend it. It contrasted sharply with their starkly selfish eagerness to sit in the highest seats of honor in the new Kingdom. Hence, they could not have invented it about him. "The Son of man," they said, "came to seek and to save that which was lost." They quoted him, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners." His story as they remembered it was a full living out of his own command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

This ministering motive expanded in all directions. It sought to enlighten men's minds, arouse their souls, and alleviate their sufferings. The latter is most vividly set forth in the miracle tales.<sup>2</sup> "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up." Although this summary of Jesus' healing ministry has major moral and spiritual implications, yet back of it lies the tenacious memory that Jesus poured forth his energies in unselfish efforts to mitigate the sufferings of men.

This full self-giving went beyond grappling with physical needs. It sought to reach the mind. It spent itself in teaching far more than in curing. While at first glance the gospels seem to be an unending succession of miracles, actually there are recorded but a score and a half of wonder tales. The teachings of Jesus, by comparison, are voluminous. In his day Jesus was not known as "the Healer," but as "the Teacher." "He opened his mouth

<sup>2</sup> See the chapter, "His Emotions."

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and taught them," was far more important in their memories of him than "he reached forth his hand and touched him."

What a range these teachings cover! As compared with the handful of miracles that sparkle in these memories of him, how numerous are his parables! B. T. D. Smith's critical study *The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels* lists sixty-four, long and short, great and small. Professor Burton Scott Easton in his book *What Jesus Taught* classifies the gospel sayings into more than forty subjects, ranging from "Impurity" and "Love of Money" to "Prayer," "Joy," "Cost to Self," and "The Present Kingdom." As he surveyed the records of Jesus as they remembered him, the author of John, awe-struck by this self-giving motive pouring itself out in teaching, wrote of Jesus as saying, "I am come as a light into the world."

This self-giving motive is made more radiant because it is totally unmixed with a selfish desire. Jesus was remembered as doing no mighty work in his own behalf. Every act of helpfulness, each word of truth, was for others' benefit. In that ancient self-seeking world where even many religious leaders were motivated by personal profit and power he went about giving himself away. He would neither make stones into bread to ease his own hunger, nor trim his message to hold his popularity.

The people of Jesus' day could not understand such complete devotion to unselfish ministry. It bewildered them. The motives they experienced and observed were always mixed. They began to attribute to him sinister purposes



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and methods. Repeatedly, after deeds of high generosity or words of lofty import, Jesus found himself barraged with salvos of criticism. His persistent efforts "to seek and to save that which was lost" brought him sneers and scorn. After he had performed a gracious act or expounded some noble truth, men "went out and took counsel how they might destroy him."

The leaders of his day charged Jesus with gross self-seeking. "By the prince of demons he casteth out demons." At his trial he was charged with blasphemy against the law of Moses and planning insurrection against the rule of Caesar. How far his detractors really subscribed to the charge is uncertain, but they are proof that the belief was widespread that his motives were not wholly pure. They were sure that he was, like others, bent on getting the most for himself out of life.

Distant echoes of these charges rumble through the Gospel of John. They witness to the heated debates that once raged about his motives. They repeat, with interpretations, the old slanders. "Thou hast a demon." "He leadeth the multitude astray." "Thou, being man, makest thyself God." And they receive the sharp rejoinder, "I receive not glory from men."

But Jesus not only suffered the malice of social and religious leaders; he also endured the careless indifference of those to whom he came to minister. His good works they received with gladness. But that was all. To his earnest proclamations of the Kingdom they were deaf. If he would perform cures, yes! If he were willing to feed

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them, to be sure! If he related a fascinating story, by all means! If he were in a mood to dine and be sociable, well and good! But repentance, neighborly love, obedience to the heavenly Father, and eager loyalty to the approaching Kingdom? Never!

His sincere following was never large. Even those who, in the first flush of popular commotion, called themselves his disciples soon quit him. "Many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him." That it was profoundly disappointing and discouraging to the sensitive Jesus is evident. That he was hurt to the quick is clear. The Fourth Gospel declares that he even feared defection among the Twelve. In that day of a dwindling following, with a deep sigh he inquired of them, "Will ye also go away?" Plainly the earnestness of his motive to serve and keep serving was sorely tried.

Finally it broke his heart. The Jesus they remembered had sat one day on the Mount of Olives overlooking the Holy City. Before him spread the walled town, its splendid temple shining under the bright Mediterranean sky, the smoke of incense streaming up in the blue. To the north Bethel, that ancient sacred city of Israel and the scene of Jacob's vision, slept on its hill. To the left and south the houses of Bethlehem, the city of David, clung along the ridge. Beyond the city to the west rolled the Judean hills. Everything was radiant with beauty and rich in sacred story. Within the town, Jesus could picture what he had often seen, the flippant throng surging through the narrow streets taking no thought whatever of



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the morrow, the scheming merchants shrewdly making the most of every bargain, and political ecclesiastics manipulating religion within the sacred courts to enhance their profit and power—most of them utterly careless, or openly hostile, to his gentle ministry and his strong proclamations of the Kingdom. It broke his heart. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," he sobbed, "how oft would I have gathered thy children, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Yet Jesus never faltered. Throughout his public ministry his dominant motive of helpful service as they remembered it never changed. From first to last he was a ministering servant. He sought for himself neither property, pleasure, popularity, place, power, nor peace. He spent his life giving himself away. In his own words, "I am among you as one who serveth."

What kept Jesus' purpose to serve burning hot under the drenchings of indifference, criticism, and defeat? What deeper motive fed this flaming desire for the salvation of men? Here we plumb the inmost heart of Jesus and enter into his holy of holies. His underlying purpose was to do the will of God. "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him who sent me." "I always do those things that are pleasing unto him." That was Jesus' loftiest motive. It shone like sunlight over his life. No more appropriate words can summarize all he tried to do than his own phrase, "I have finished the work thou

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gavest me to do." He died with one triumphant cry, "It is finished." The will of God was complete.

This knowing and doing the will of God was no simple thing. Jesus' great crises, as we have seen,<sup>3</sup> involved his struggles with the will of God. Here it is only necessary to review them as light on his grapplings with his Father's will. The joyous story of his early visit to Jerusalem shows the young Jesus first becoming aware that the will of God must be faced. There was no escaping it. Precisely what it might eventually require he could not guess, but he must reckon with it. During the wilderness temptation, he was confronted with the application of that will to the practical realities of his mission. The story boldly suggests that he found it difficult to determine exactly all that doing his Father's will involved. There in the wilderness Jesus realized that for him God's will meant taking up his work as a ministering servant. By doing the will of God, Jesus was brought to the brink of failure and the threat of martyrdom. The transfiguration found him reviewing his program in the light of this failure. In the face of such a disastrous turn of affairs, what was the will of God now? He decided to go on and take the consequences. Finally, in Gethsemane, he faced the question of holding to the will of God even unto death. The story suggests that he found it so difficult that he begged off. "If it be possible, let this cup pass. . . ." In the end he surrendered himself to that final will.

<sup>3</sup> In the chapter, "His Experiences."



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These stories show how strenuously Jesus battled to keep this most lofty of possible motives clean, brave, and true. Sometimes he saw his Father's will but dimly; sometimes he found its practical application full of uncertainty; sometimes he could bring himself to obey it only after mighty wrestling. It called for complete self-giving in teaching, preaching, and healing. As a later believer, mulling over the memories of Jesus' selfless devotion put it, "Christ also pleased not himself."

What this full commitment to the will of God finally cost Jesus is described in the passion story. The sharp sorrows of the Last Supper, the exhausting agony in the garden, the stark shame of the betrayal, the cold loneliness of desertion and the biting hurt of denial, the scornful slanders of the trial, the stinging smart of the scourges, the heavy burden of the cross, the cruel lacerations of the nails, the excruciating weight on his shoulder sockets, the raw chill of the wind, the insulting jeers of his mockers, the hot burning of thirst, the slow torture of exhaustion and the deepening darkness of dissolution—what was he doing amid this suffering? *He was doing the will of God.*

It is small wonder that in Jesus as they remembered him this unswerving devotion to his Father's will seems the holiest element in his life. It gave sustaining purpose and power to all that he did. They remembered he had taught that, as with him, so it was to be with them, nothing but the will of God. "When ye pray, say . . . Thy will be done."

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### HIS UNPOPULARITY

*"They were moved with indignation against him"*

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MANY SORTS OF PEOPLE DISLIKED JESUS. THEY NOT ONLY disliked him; they hated him. The Pharisees, gentlemen of culture, leaders in society and religion respected and followed by the masses, ridiculed him. He, in turn, ridiculed them. Sadducees, the ecclesiastical overlords of the nation, suave, rich, power-clinging, openly flayed him. He, in turn, flayed them. His own disciples, loyal, promising, expectant, and eager for the main chance, often criticized him sharply. In turn, he rebuked them sternly. His Nazareth neighbors, easygoing, jealous, and bigoted, were infuriated by his apparent assumption of superiority. In return, he "could do no mighty work among them," and left them. The crowds, restless, careless, thrill-seeking, deserted him when it became clear that he would not become their king. In turn, he withdrew more and more into the privacy of the apostolic circle.

To be sure, Jesus had many friends. Some of their names peep out of the gospels: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, Simon the leper, Joanna, the wife of Chuza who was



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Herod's steward, Mary Magdalene, Joseph of Arimathea, Cleopas and the other Emmaus disciples, the Twelve, possibly Nicodemus, and certainly others unnamed. Friends he had in number, but enemies were his in hosts. Jesus was not only his day's most stirring character, but its most hated hero.

The reasons for this deadly hostility can be summarized in a paragraph. To the religious authorities of his day, Jesus was utterly unorthodox. He "broke" the Sabbath, ignored the fasts, and neglected the ritual washings before meals. He interfered with the temple revenue by driving out the money changers. He ignored class and racial distinctions. He openly ate with publicans and sinners. He traveled among the half-breed Samaritans, and put these filthy people into his parables as exalted examples of neighborliness—better, indeed, than priest and Levite.

To the crowds he was utterly unpatriotic, refusing to restore the Kingdom to Israel, ignoring the Roman oppression, and careless of Jahweh's march among the nations. On the other hand, to the Sadducees, ensconced in power under Roman patronage, he was a dangerous radical. His movement was likely to get out of hand, start a revolution which mighty Rome would crush with slaughter and ruin. So "they went out and took counsel how they might destroy him." Save for the single flash of Peter's sword in the garden, and the ineffective protest of Nicodemus before the Sanhedrin, not a finger nor a

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voice among all his friends was lifted to defend him. He went to his doom despised and rejected of men.

As his opponents saw him, the root of the trouble was personal. It was more than a clash of principles and policies. In their minds here was a young man who could not get along with people. To them he was a hurler of sharp epithets, given to ridicule, brusque and abrupt in manner, and as uncompromising an absolutist as a dictator. They hated him not only for his offensive works; they hated him for himself as well.

This hostility is a larger matter than Jesus' severity. The gospel memories are indelibly marked with his frank manner, his cutting replies, and the hatred he received from his enemies. Like a good surgeon, Jesus had to use the knife. As anaesthetics can rarely be used in spiritual surgery, many reacted fiercely to his sharp excisions. Hence they hated *him*, and the reasons are clear.

For one thing, in their opinion Jesus could not get along with the people that counted. This showed itself in several ways. He was constantly calling people by hard names. He saw with sunlight clarity the shortcomings, foibles, and sins of human nature, and tagged them pointedly. He called folks blind, fools, wicked, unprofitable, hard, slothful, unjust, hypocrites, camel-swallowers, vipers, liars, murderers, widow-robbers, devils, white-washed tombs, gnat-strainers, mint-tithers, place-seekers, thieves, robbers, wolves. Nothing arouses the ire more quickly than to be tagged with biting labels, or pricked



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with tart epithets. It stirred many of his listeners to wrath. Losing sight of the fundamental issues, they remembered only the salty terms rubbed into their open wounds.

It seemed to his opponents that Jesus considered them impossible and hopeless. Apparently no doom was too harsh. Such phrases as "beaten with many stripes," "delivered unto the jailor," and "pay the last farthing" were bad enough. Failure to live up to the light one had drew more biting condemnation. Pious leaders who misused their religious responsibilities received a life sentence: "How shall you escape the judgment of Gehennah?" The shirker of obligations received the summary dismissal: "Cast ye the worthless servant out." Those who refused to avail themselves of religious opportunities were warned of capital punishment ahead: "On whom this stone shall fall shall be broken in pieces." Failure to accept his call to repentance brought the judgment: "Ye shall likewise perish." Refusal to forgive pestiferous or mean brethren brought a short, "Neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." Innocuous, insipid living was "fit neither for the land nor dung-hill, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men." As for a really vicious sinner, it was "better that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be sunk in the depths of the sea." Those refusing to accept the truth were consigned to a final punishment where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Those who refused his invitation

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would later find the door shut and bolted. "I never knew you . . . depart from me."

Naturally Jesus received retaliation in kind. Many charges were leveled against him. Although a self-appointed religious teacher, he neglected the accepted religious practices. He slighted or ignored fasting. Seeming to feel no need of such acts of repentance, he merrily dined out whenever, wherever, and with whomever he pleased. Though brilliant and clever, he undeniably lacked training in the rabbinical schools. While he knew letters, he had "never learned."

To his old neighbors, he was but the village artisan gone wild. "Is this not the carpenter?" they asked. Some respectable leaders could not concede that he was doing religious work at all. He was in partnership with demons, working evil under the mask of doing good. "By Beelzebub he casteth out demons." He ignored the most obvious social distinctions, but had no social standing himself. Good men and bad seemed alike to him. "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." He was a dangerous radical, exciting discontent instead of strengthening the foundations. "He stirreth up the people."

The more they thought about it, the more preposterous appeared his pretense of religious leadership. He was a rank blasphemer, forgiving sins on his own authority by a mere wave of his hand. "Who is this that speaketh blasphemies?" Even the blessed Sabbath was desecrated by his loose practices. "This man is not from God because he keepeth not the Sabbath." He attacked that last



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refuge of true religion, the holy temple. "We heard him say, I will destroy this temple." Nothing seemed safe in this man's hands—neither the long tried standards of right and wrong, the wise distinctions between good and evil people, the reverent acknowledgment of the separate spheres of divine and human prerogatives, respect and obedience to the Mosaic law, observance and support of the Sabbath, nor the honor and glory of the house of God. Here, it seemed to many, was a fresh, bumptious iconoclast, bent on destroying everything sacred. Glutton, winebibber, demon, Samaritan, unschooled, Sabbath-breaker, temple desecrator! It was *himself* they hated.

To many people, also, Jesus must have appeared to lack elementary tact. This seeming tactlessness increased the personal resentment against him and sharpened his unpopularity. His weeping over Jerusalem, with its plaintive "how oft would I have gathered you," shows how eagerly he sought to win the hostile leaders. But his stern words to them canceled his winsome efforts. For when he was rebuked with, "Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? who can forgive sins, but God alone?" he offered no syllable of conciliation. To their manifest alarm at his apparent overthrowing of the divinely established Mosaic system of priest, temple, and sacrifices, Jesus offered no explanation. Ignoring their challenge, he peremptorily said to the sick man, "I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy pallet, and go to thine house." The deep

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chagrin of his challengers can be imagined, also their rising wrath.

At other times he burlesqued these powerful leaders. Their praying, almsgiving, and religious observances he repeatedly derided. The humbug praying loud and long upon the street corner "to be seen of men" cartooned the praise-seeking worshiper. The Pharisee standing in the temple and thanking God he is "not as other men" is like a comic sketch. In another absurd picture a trumpet is heard sounding down the street. Shoppers and loafers become alert and expectant. A great parade must be approaching. First appears a lone trumpeter, blasting away. Behind him struts Old Money Bags, followed by an attendant bearing a banner proclaiming: He donated a thousand shekels to the Dung Gate's wretched poor.

There are other pictures as caustic and ludicrous: Sol-emn folks swaggering about, having made "broad the borders of their garments," and having "enlarged their phylacteries" from little head- and arm-pieces to huge containers protruding from their foreheads and bulging on their biceps. Pictures of pious elders crowding the long bench at the front of the synagogue and stroking with affected reverence their holy beards while facing the humble congregation; or of meticulous souls blindly bent on observing the requirements of the Law by tithing their mint and cummin, and washing their hands to the elbows before every meal. If one were sincere in such practices, this lampooning would wound most deeply. If one were consciously a sham, such public derision would



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only madden the more. In the end, as regards the religious leaders, Jesus summed them up in one swift conclusion: "Ye are of your father, the devil."

His manner with his disciples was as candid and severe as with his enemies. They were but learners, as the word "disciples" indicates. Occasionally a good teacher is forced to be drastic with his pupils. At times the Twelve must have recoiled at Jesus' severity. When they could not credit his announcement of his coming death, they got neither argument nor explanation, but only sharp reiteration beginning, "Let these words sink into your ears." When they further objected his tongue grew keener. "The Son of man must . . . suffer many things and be killed." It was said with such explosive emphasis that though they still could not grasp it and wished to inquire further "they were afraid to ask him." Peter's burst of remonstrance against such foolish and suicidal action brought the devastating rebuke, "Get thee behind me, devil!" Unconvinced, they were temporarily silenced.

This same abrupt manner appeared in Jesus' dealing with those who interrupted him. A good teacher is compelled at times to ride roughshod over those who interrupt him. Only so can he make any headway. When that unnamed woman, elated with Jesus' words and actions, sang out, "Blessed be the womb that bare thee," she was paying Jesus her highest compliment. How wonderful, she was saying in effect, to have been your mother! I would be the proudest woman alive had I borne you. Such an enthusiastic compliment, shallow as

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it may have been, would seem to merit some kindly rejoinder. But Jesus had to keep on the subject. So he capitalized on the interruption. Back came what may have seemed to the woman a thankless retort, "Blessed are those that hear the will of God and do it."

His own mother experienced a similar reply. Up in Nazareth, hearing that Jesus was demon-possessed, arousing the opposition of constituted authorities, she went with some of his brothers down to Capernaum, apparently to fetch him home. She probably hoped that back in Nazareth in the quiet monotony of the carpenter shop, with the help of proper exorcisms and charms she could drive out the evil spirits and restore her son's sanity. Outside the passion story, it is the most pitiful picture in the gospels—the worried mother, fearful and foreboding, completely misunderstanding her son; and the son, in the midst of his self-giving ministry, suddenly faced with the full misapprehensions of the woman who bore him and trained him to manhood. After due inquiry she found him speaking in a house so packed that entrance was impossible. Word was passed in that she was calling for him. "Behold, thy mother and brethren without seek for thee." Jesus doubtless felt the pathos of the situation, but again he capitalized upon the interruption to set forth one of his greatest lessons. "Looking round on them that sat about him, he saith, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother."

Earnest seekers sometimes had to face his rebuffs. Oc-



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casionally such inquirers need to be jolted wide awake into seeing clearly all that is involved. Hence, at times Jesus felt it necessary to beat off these volunteers with some stiff proviso. When one enthusiast responded with an eager, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," he was brought to his senses with a chilling, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of heaven have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Meeting another promising man, Jesus commanded "Follow me." But this man had family hindrances.<sup>1</sup> In the picturesque way of the Oriental he pleaded, "Suffer me first to go bury my father." Like a shot came back the summons to immediate enlistment, "Leave the dead to bury their dead." When the rich young ruler panted out his eager request, "Good teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" his courteous salutation was met with the quick counter question, "Why callest thou me good?" And the sudden command, "Go, sell . . . give all," was beyond the young man's powers. "He went away sorrowful."

It is with elderly seekers that one needs to have especial care. Their old prejudices, inworn mind-sets, and habituated reactions can never be completely cast off. In the Orient, additional care was needed. For there it is youth that listens and age that advises. It required profound condescension for the learned Nicodemus of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin to seek an interview with the self-

<sup>1</sup> So the early Church, faced with family divisions, seems to have interpreted the story. But the man's excuse is a notorious Oriental evasion, a face-saving way of refusal. Hence Jesus' quick dismissal of his "excuse."

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appointed young Rabbi from despised Galilee. It was as if today a justice of the Supreme Court should seek the advice of some brilliant but wildcat young lawyer with no standing before the bar. With fine deference Nicodemus began, "Rabbi, we know thou art a teacher come from God," words overlaid with Johannine colors but full of the underlying amenities of the situation. Back came the abrupt reply, "Ye must be born anew from above." When the old man, puzzled by the cryptic phrasing, quietly asked, "How can a man be born when he is old?" he got the startling answer, "Art thou a teacher in Israel and understandest not these things?" That Jesus' plain speaking had good effect is clear, for later the aging Pharisee defended before the Sanhedrin the young teacher who had been so frank with him. Upon his gray hairs his fellow judges heaped the humiliating sneer, "Art thou also of Galilee?"

Furthermore, Jesus seemed incapable of adjustment or compromise. Young as he was, the cement had already set. To his enemies he had apparently forgotten the ancient adage of his people, "A soft answer turneth away wrath," and the implications of his own injunction, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you." To many a conservative, he was ever the extremist. He saw everything as jet black or sun white. He was color blind to all shades of gray. One was good or bad. There was no middle ground. He demanded everything or noth-



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ing. "Ye shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect," was his blinding ideal.

Never would he tone down or compromise. "If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. . . . If thy right hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee. . . ." "If thy brother . . . sin against thee seven times in a day . . . thou shalt forgive him." "If the salt have lost its savor it is henceforth good for nothing." "He that is not with me is against me."

Moreover, in the eyes of some of his contemporaries, Jesus refused to compromise where compromise not only would have worked no harm, but to them would have prevented misunderstanding and bitterness. Spying a man "who had his hand withered" present in a synagogue service, Jesus determined to heal him. The man had been a long time in this case and could hardly have been suffering. Jesus needed to wait only till sundown and he could have cured the man without criticism. A few hours of delay, a kindly bit of compromise, and the dark suspicion of his enemies would have been stilled. But no! To the worshipers' astonishment, the cure must be immediate. Prayers stopped; the reading of the Scripture ceased; the singing of psalms stilled. Jesus "saith unto the man that had his hand withered, Arise into the midst. . . . And when he had looked round about on them with anger . . . he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand." The inevitable followed. His enemies went out and took counsel against him.

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Although he endangered himself by it, he never adopted any other procedure. With him, it was immediately and now, at once or never. In the case of the infirm woman, bowed over for eighteen years, there was no imperative rush to heal her. There were the rights of worshipers to consider, and his enemies waiting to make further capital out of his summary acts. A little adroitness, a few hours delay, and both the evil to be avoided and the good to be done could have been accomplished. But no! Jesus would not, even at grave risk to himself, dodge the main issue. "He called her, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity." Naturally the ruler of the synagogue, who was in charge of the service, was indignant. A controversy ensued in which "all his adversaries were put to shame."

In the Fourth Gospel the same heroically uncompromising spirit is manifest. The lame man lying on the porch before the pool of Bethesda certainly could have waited the remainder of that one short Sabbath. And the man born blind could have been put off a few brief hours before being sent to wash in the pool of Siloam. The Law allowed that if one was suffering and in mortal danger, relief could be administered. Neither of these unfortunates was so suffering. In the leaders' minds there was not the slightest need of haste. Jesus' insistence increased their mounting hatred.

This unyielding attitude ran throughout his public teachings. Jesus would brook no hesitation. If a man once set out to follow and showed any slight regrets, he



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thereby disqualified himself. "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." Seemingly, a man should have no other interest than this one great cause. No man could serve two masters. One must seek the Kingdom first. One could not serve God and gold. Entrance to life could be found only at the narrow door. It was always black or white, good or bad, everything or nothing. It is not surprising that so uncompromising a man was quite clearly, in the eyes of his contemporaries, impossible.

That Jesus was fully aware how others felt about him personally is hardly to be questioned. But he never changed. However much his increasing unpopularity hurt and troubled him, he never bemoaned it. Nothing could turn him toward seeking wide acclaim. That way, he knew, was the way of death. That way, also, would be the way of death to his followers. They too must eschew all universal regard. Like him, they must walk the way of lonely unpopularity. "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you."

## CHAPTER NINE

# HIS DISTINCTIVE QUALITIES

*"Behold, the man!"*

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EVERY PERSON POSSESSES CERTAIN CHARACTERISTIC QUALITIES that set him off from other people. These qualities are never new, original, or unique in him. They are to be found in varying degree in folks everywhere. But in him these common elements are so combined and emphasized as to define his individuality.

One cannot think of Washington without recollecting his dignity, patriotism, and honor. But dignity, patriotism, and honor are neither rare nor peculiar traits. They are found with blessed frequency in the general run of people. But in Washington they were so strong as to become distinctive in him. Lincoln cannot be recalled without remembering his humor, melancholy, and democratic spirit. These are not unique characteristics. Most men possess them to some extent. But in Lincoln they dominated every part of him so that he can neither be fairly discussed nor properly understood if they are ignored.

Jesus had his common yet distinctive traits which set him off *as a man* from all other men. His character is



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many-sided, and it is difficult to select the exact qualities which distinguished him. Certainly those characteristics discussed in previous chapters—his compassion, his anger, his severity—must be included. The most marked of his qualities was his religiousness. But as this overlaps the main point of the coming chapter, it is omitted here. The selection that follows is necessarily limited and will doubtless appear to some as ill chosen. At least the points have enough importance to merit discussion.

One quality in Jesus as they remembered him was his complete naturalness. How extraordinary this is can be realized by recalling how few people are even partially natural. It is yet more startling when one considers that it was as a religious personality that Jesus was unaffectedly natural. For it is in the field of religion that we become most embarrassed, stilted, and conventional. Without self-consciousness, like a happy child, Jesus lived in untrameled naturalness. But unlike tormenting children, he struck no poses and did no showing-off to gain attention. Unlike adults, also, he had no social fears that inhibited his spontaneity.

Jesus moved in society with the freedom and ease of the wild birds. He was completely at home among all classes and on every occasion. The socially elite never overawed or checked his gracious natural impulses. He was unembarrassed by Nicodemus' high rank of Pharisee, and unabashed by his position as a member of the great Sanhedrin. He dined with natural ease at the table of

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the snobbish Simon the Pharisee, and though an invited guest rebuked with pointed candor the narrow meanness of his host. With equal friendliness he ate with publicans and sinners. He went delightedly to the banquet of Matthew the publican. Ignoring the convention that it is common courtesy to wait for an invitation to dine, he invited himself to dinner with Zacchaeus, another publican.

Though living in a day when fixed lines marked the boundaries of social intercourse between men and women, he crossed them openly. He welcomed mothers who brought their children for his blessing; he gave to women their full share of his healing powers. He accepted without a qualm the thankful service of certain Galilean women friends who "ministered unto him of their substance." The names of many of his women friends shine from the gospel memories, while all the deeds of two-thirds of his disciples are utterly forgotten.

Pure and sensitive as he was, he was equally natural with women of ill-repute. He was quite unembarrassed before the pert Samaritan woman. Only in the presence of the woman taken in adultery did he blush. But that was not because of the woman. It was rather at the obscene brass of her accusers. To them she was merely bait with which to ensnare Jesus. In embarrassment Jesus "stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground." When the accusers had slunk away in defeated chagrin, he "lifted himself up" and stood unabashed before the woman. Very naturally, with fine courtesy, he dismissed



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her with a quiet encouragement, "Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way; from henceforth sin no more."

Few adults can be completely natural and easily spontaneous with children. Childhood's little games with their endless repetitions soon weary them. They descend to the drivel of baby babble, or the equal folly of offering advice suitable only for maturity. But all children take to spontaneous, natural people. Apparently Jesus got on well with children. The evidence is slight but sufficient. Mothers evidently found that their little ones were unafraid in his presence. Jesus as they remembered him was fond of standing in the marketplace to watch the youngsters playing their games of wedding and funeral, carrying on with pouts and quarrels and happy laughter. His winsome, easy way made children willing to come to him when called, to stand in the midst of bearded grown-ups as little examples of the Kingdom of God. Only a man completely natural could have won such co-operation from cautious childhood.

With his close friends and intimate disciples Jesus was equally free and natural. It is true that close friends allow liberties elsewhere forbidden. But it is likewise true that among friends we are often most hampered. Knowing them well we hesitate lest we arouse their resentment or hurt their feelings. So we suppress ourselves before them. Between Jesus and his companions frank freedom reigned. Mary sat absorbed at his feet, his devoted listener, deliberately ignoring for the time being his physical needs and her own. Martha did not hesitate to interrupt,

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bustling in and heatedly admonishing the Teacher that he was keeping her sister from her duties and letting the cares of a thoughtful hostess fall on herself alone. Jesus, with equal freedom, rebuked the fussy Martha. Her elaborate preparations were unnecessary; Mary should not lose her self-chosen "better part." Such a scene could happen only where friendship was free, frank, and utterly natural.

The mother of James and John felt the same ease before him. She gladly begged for her two sons the highest offices in the new kingdom she supposed Jesus was about to set up. With like candor Jesus refused her. They were not, he said, his to give. His disciples were equally free with him and he with them. They never hesitated to rebuke him, especially for his folly in courting martyrdom. With similar freedom he gave them stern replies.

This complete naturalness of Jesus came to its highest expression in his religious acts and attitudes. He had no pious poses, and he scorned all stilted, honor-seeking display. He made great raillery over men who gave alms "to be seen of men," thereby to gain reputations for piety and generosity. He derided certain Pharisees for making long prayers on street corners before a staring public "to be seen of men." He refused to support routine fastings on set days. Such mechanical practices could be no natural expression of the heart.

His own praying was so completely natural that it captivated his disciples. "Lord, teach us to pray," they be-



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sought him. His prayers, what suggestions we have of them, were short and offered no information to his Father, but went trustingly to the point. How simple was the sincerity of his praying in dark Gethsemane! He might have reviewed the general situation before the Lord, outlined the impending catastrophe, defended his good efforts and enumerated his accomplishments, excused himself of responsibility for the bitter failure, and suggested a course that might promise hope of removing the impending doom. He never mentioned them. Already his Father knew these things. They were not the issue. His Father's will was the one concern. With complete confidence that his Father saw and knew all, and with complete naturalness, he went straight to the point: "Thy will be done."

Jesus was equally unaffected in his discussions of religion. In part, it was his easy naturalness that astonished the multitudes. He did not bind himself to the stereotyped interpretations of the scribes. He did not discuss the dead conventions of the Law. His style was fumigated of the heavy jargon of the rabbinical schools. When he preached, he talked of flowers and birds, grapes and brambles, light and salt. He illuminated his points with sparkling parables. It is no marvel that "the multitudes were astonished at his teachings, for he taught them as one having authority." As much as what he said, it was his spontaneous naturalness that captivated men.

It is not surprising that his followers began to covet this naturalness for themselves. The writer of John saw that

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all men who would name his name might have it to the full. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Paul, having been liberated from the shackles of the Law, raised aloft the banner that has become both the offer and command to partake to the full of Jesus' joyous, spontaneous naturalness. "Ye are called to freedom."

A second distinctive quality in Jesus was his love of nature. He was drenched with the out-of-doors. Scenes from the vast out-of-doors filled his mind. Word pictures of it fell from his tongue.

It may appear surprising that a village artisan should give attention to grass, hens, vineyards, foxes, and harvests. To suppose that this is due largely to the fact that during his ministry he went about on foot over Palestine is too small an explanation. The truth is that the Oriental peasant lived out of doors. His house was no convenient, spacious, well-lighted home. It was a small, one-roomed, one-windowed, stone-and-mud shelter, dark, crowded, and stuffy. Except for the winter months when the cold rains drenched and icy winds chilled, Jesus, like his neighbors, spent his time out of doors. His mother's home was little used in summer except for storage, and for shade from the scorching midday heat. Through the long evenings, like his fellow villagers, he sat upon the flat roof, sharing with his friends the village news and beholding the slow march of the radiant stars. In all likelihood the later interview with Nicodemus took place



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upon a Jerusalem housetop. "The wind bloweth where it will," said Jesus, stretching forth his hand into the evening breeze.

Likewise his workshop, a small hole in the wall with one side completely open, was bare to every weather. In spring and fall it welcomed the warming sun, and in summer a rude awning made it a shady shelter from the blistering heat. Whenever Jesus laid aside his tools and walked abroad, it was but a few steps to the open country—the plowed fields, olive orchards, grape vineyards, and the high hill with its views toward Hermon and the Great Sea.

It is little wonder that Jesus' speech revealed years of quiet observation of nature. Intensely he had observed the changing earth and varying sky. All outdoors sang with beauty and spoke with meaning. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear." "When ye see a cloud rising in the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower . . . . And when ye see a south wind blowing, ye say, There will be a scorching heat." With the countryside invading the town, and living in the open air, Jesus knew as much about nature as he did of carpenter's tools and seasoned woods.

Outdoors nothing escaped the sweeping survey and penetrating gaze of this carpenter's eye—fig trees new-green with spring's tender shoots, or full-leaved but barren; orchards of ancient, gnarled olives granting cool shade and rest, wayside mulberries offering respite to weary travelers and fruit to man and bird; terraced vineyards

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climbing stony hillsides, close-pruned and bare in spring, leafed and heavy with clustered grapes in late summer.

His color-loving eye caught the bright "lily of the field," a small red anemone that carpeted the Galilean hills in spring with the gorgeousness of an Oriental rug. He delighted in the yellow mustard whose brilliant blossoms reflected the sunshine's gold. The plain green grass entranced him, and he declared that God clothed it with its restful emerald. He saw the tawny bramble bush, its daggers unsheathed to stab unwary ankles. Down in Jordan's jungle he noted dull green reeds rattling like paper "shaken by the wind."

He was familiar with the wild things of nature, the untamed and free—the raucous sparrows hopping about the marketplace, or snared and offered, limp and lifeless, for sale "two for a penny." Out in the open he watched the wild birds as they "built their nests," or in the trees "lodged among the branches." He spied the swift, cunning fox hurrying to his hole. His eye followed the far flight of the raven. He dodged the dangerous snake and poisonous scorpion. Even the rooting of the despised pig had not escaped his thoughtful glance. "Cast not your pearls before swine," he admonished.

Not wild, but as interesting to him, was the nervous hen in a fluster to "gather her chicks" from fleeting danger. He liked the quiet flock of sheep grazing along a hillside, a gray cloud on a green sky. Alone on the hills late at night he glimpsed the dark shadow of a be-



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lated shepherd singing his way home, rejoicing at having "found his sheep which was lost."

Agricultural life thrilled him, the rain falling on the brown fields of the good and evil farmer alike. And then the growing! The first tender green shoots growing into the darker green of waving grain, later turning to the golden glow of ripened heads until finally the fields became "white unto the harvest." Every phase of the work delighted him—the sweaty plowman pausing to review his work while his oxen rested, or the goodman easing off the heavy, binding yoke from the oxen's necks, making the "burden light."

The varying moods of weather he loved. He rejoiced in the furious storm with its blinding zigzag flash of midnight lightning, "that cometh forth from the east and is seen even unto the west." He enjoyed the distant sparkle of the shining sea, the high sailing of sun-white clouds against the sky's cerulean blue, as though it were the canopied throne of a king "coming with glory and power." He knew the wilting heat of noon when the thirsty body panted, "Give me to drink," and rejoiced in the glad refreshment of a "cup of cold water." He had shivered in the damp, numbing chill of winter, for once he said pitifully, "Pray that your flight be not in winter." He had burned under the scorching wind of the desert sirocco and rejoiced in the cooling joy of Mediterranean breezes.

And then the hills, strong, silent, enfolding. How often Jesus escaped to the hills! To be sure, Palestine is a hilly country. One is always on top of a hill, at the foot

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of a hill, or making one's steep way along the flank of a hill. But Jesus sought the hills. He forsook the crowded beach and the hustling town to find refuge in them.

There is something symbolic about hills. From generation to generation they stand, steadfast and immovable. The seasons come and go; the changing years march their uninterrupted pace; the devastating storms howl and batter; the slow generations pass. But always there stand the hills, never wearied, never worried, never moved. Eternal, so far as man's short life matters, they remain the same yesterday, today, and forever. Stalwart ramparts, they stand immovable, strong and abiding. There is comfort, rest, and power to be found in hills. Out into the hills went the hunted, hated, harried Jesus, later to return at peace, refreshed and able.

It was usually at night, dim-lit with its "powdered drift of suns," or radiant under the silent shining of the white and holy moon, that Jesus sought the hills. He loved the night. He was wont to rise "a great while before day . . . and depart to a desert place" to pray, to think, and to refresh himself. How important is the night becomes manifest when one considers that half of time is after dark, and half of life must be lived through the night watches. "Before man lies down to pleasant dreams" he makes the night hours bright with music and song, with dancing and merry feasting. Jesus knew the urgency of the day. "We must work . . . while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." But in a remarkable way Jesus knew the beauty and blessing



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of the night. He knew the rich values to be gained from the long, shadowed hours. He let the dark minister to him as well as the light. He wrapped himself in her sable garments, filled his soul with the beauty of her spangled shining, and drank in the fullness of her peace.

Of all things out of doors, Jesus most loved the solitudes. Only great souls can endure being alone, and Jesus was at home with solitude. Only when alone could he find fullest rest, with the opportunity for the thinking and communion he constantly needed. The towns, noisy late and early, and the houses, crowded and bustling, offered no refuge or quiet. But out of doors was the open field, the sleeping lake, and the slumbering hills under the silent sky. Out into the stilly vastness, empty of human clatter and woe, went Jesus. As it was remembered of him, "he was alone on the land," and "he went up into the mountain apart to pray . . . and when even was come he was there alone."

One can see him on some far hill slope, in a silence made more still by the whisperings of the insects; or pacing slowly along the shore, the quiet made vivid by the muffled crunch of his sandaled feet, and the lipping waves on the beach; or sitting relaxed in the deep shadow of a sleeping olive tree, the stillness emphasized by the gentle purr of the wind in his ears. Alone, with his Father.

These rich and varied fragments of nature peep out of Jesus' remembered actions, or from his conversation and preaching. Yet it must not be thought that Jesus went outdoors to find God in nature. Jesus went out of doors

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because he loved nature and rejoiced in it. His actions and words could not have been so filled with the joy of nature had he not loved it for its own beautiful self. He did not go there to find God, for he already knew God to the full. Harrassed and heckled in the crowded villages, he knew that out in the open he could be with his Father unmolested.

It is hard to say exactly how much truth Jesus learned from nature. Perhaps none. But it is certain that his experiences with her reinforced his knowledge and furnished him with brilliant illustrations. Sparrows hopping in the marketplace emphasized the lesson that life is happiest when lived in complete, care-less trust. No spinning, no gathering into barns, yet enough. Joyous and busy, without worries, content with the daily just enough. The bright anemone and the green grass afforded incitements to trust in Providence. The red petals and brilliant blades would perish early in the summer's brown drought. Yet the great God had expended his divine care upon them. If he so clothes the frail flowers, how much more would his loving care watch over his needy children!

The hillside vineyards hanging with purple clusters enforced the truth that life is to come to fruitage. That was the tragedy of the empty runners—no fruit. That was the glory of the purple clusters—much fruit. But fruitage comes only by pruning. Jesus saw the vineyard keeper at work in the winter. Clip, clip, clip. Off fell the strong vines that looked so promising. Slash and clip, until only the bare, bony stubs of the central trunks re-



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mained. But the harvest would be fruit, more fruit! Life becomes fruitful only by pruning.

The shepherd singing his way homeward through the dark, the wandering sheep sleeping across his shoulders, pictured the pricelessness of life. For "how much then is a man of more value than a sheep!" If the rescue of a silly sheep was worth the extra weariness of a dark night along the stony hillsides, how much more a man. If a tired shepherd would go out into the night to search for a foolish sheep, how infinitely farther will God go, seeking his lost child. If a shepherd, worn with the day's shepherding and exhausted by the night's searching, could come home rejoicing, who can guess the Father's joy over his child's return?

The sprouting of a seed illustrated life's deepest, hardest truth: the central law of life is complete self-sacrifice. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." This is life's most difficult lesson. Every growing seed illustrates it. No dying, no living; no giving, no gaining; no pruning, no fruiting; no sacrifice, nothing! That was the deepest lesson from nature.

Thus, throughout his life, nature brooded over Jesus like a mother. Throughout his boyhood he played in the open country and grew in field and hill, in shine and rain, in view of mountain, lake, and sea. All through manhood he turned to nature as to a comforting mother. Into her silent, enfolding bosom he went for rest, healing, and meditation. Alone with hill and sky he fought out his

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great temptation. Into the hills he escaped from the exhausting crowds. Far upon Hermon's towering slope, after a terrible night facing his impending death, peace came with the dawning sun. Out into the Galilean hills, escaping from hot streets and stifling mobs, he went for prayer. Once, exhausted from preaching and healing, he went for a row on the lake and let the evening waters, like a gentle lullaby, rock him to sleep. Out in the night, in the olive orchard, beneath the white spring moon, he sweat out his last fight. High on a rocky hill, under the open sky, he died. And they buried him, as he would have liked, in the peace and beauty of a garden.

It is not surprising, then, to find that Jesus as they remembered him repeatedly commanded his followers to go outdoors and look around. All he found there, all he received there, they also could find and receive. Behold! Consider! "Behold the birds of the heaven!" "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow!"

Another distinguishing trait of Jesus was his practical good sense. No saner man ever lived. Often common sense is not credited to Jesus. He was a zealous reformer, scoffers say, an earnest crusader bent on changing the world and eager to improve human nature. He was a dreamer of utopian perfection. He expected sinful human nature to turn the other cheek, give to everyone that asked, love others as oneself, have no anxiety for the morrow, and live self-crucifyingly. For his pains, he got himself martyred. But a more thoughtful study will discover that



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Jesus as they remembered him was a man of supreme sanity.

From his earliest years his home life and environment encouraged the development of practical good sense. Being one in a family of at least nine, he lived amidst the practical work and worry incident to a crowded home—the rapid coming of babies, the inevitable illnesses, and the anxieties of making ends meet. His daily work as an artisan, a most practical trade, enforced the further growth of his good sense. Sitting on the floor of his carpenter shop, working on the wood held between his feet, he had to master not only matters related to tools and wood, but problems like suiting the work to exacting demands and appeasing cranky customers. Questions about tools, materials, specifications, prices, wages, customers' criticisms and suggestions are not solved by iridescent dreams or poetic flights of fancy. They are conquered only by the sagacity of strictly practical men. And Jesus toiled a score of years in this common-sense world of practical affairs.

Moreover, all his life Jesus lived, moved, and had his being among working people—tax-gatherers, bent on the main chance; fishermen busy with boat and net; farmers occupied with ox and ass, plow and seed; housewives worried with cooking and patching, drawing water and bearing babies; zealots involved in politics and revolution; the poor and the sick, discouraged, helpless and hopeless—ordinary people all, of the earth earthly. Not airy dreamers bent on building a brave new world, but humble

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workers immersed in making a living, raising crops, keeping the family healthy and tranquil, and when necessary giving aid to stricken neighbors. Strictly practical work, all of it. Among such folk Jesus moved, not as a vague, abstract teacher, but with such fine good sense that many of them gave him their deepest respect and highest loyalty.

This trained, experienced practicality was one of his major qualities as they remembered him. It underlay all his dealings with people. What could be more sensible than his remark to the woman at the well, "Give me to drink"? It is no answer to say that Jesus was thirsty, and even a dunce if thirsty can ask for water. He was thirsty; he wanted a drink. He had no water jar, the well was deep, and he asked the woman to draw for him. But the woman was a Samaritan. "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." Moreover, she was a woman, and in such public places respectable men and women did not speak. The woman herself was astonished at the simple request. "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan and a woman?" The practical Jesus had brushed aside all differences of race, religion, and sex. He began with their common human need. Both were thirsty. Nothing could be more sagacious. It was not his lofty idealism that unlocked the situation; it was his everyday good sense.

This quality furnished him the key to every situation he faced. He used it with consummate skill in dealing



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with volatile Peter. When he first became acquainted with Peter is uncertain. That he had been considering him for some time seems likely. That he had led Peter to expect something seems certain. But when the call came it was knotted into the meshes of the fisherman's experience. "Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." It was this vast good sense that underlay the putting of the call that clinched the matter with Peter.

There is no more beautiful expression of Jesus' common sense than in the story of the raising of Jairus' daughter. Whether one considers that the twelve-year-old child was really dead, or only in a profound swoon, does not affect the case. Jesus did three things with astonishing sanity. First, he dismissed the crowd of curious and kindly neighbors, ejected the brood of noisy mourners, and left behind nine of his twelve disciples. With only his favorite three followers and the girl's parents he entered the room where she lay. This clearing the house was not a mere attempt to avoid notoriety. If the girl was restored, such advertising could not be stopped. It was more than that he needed quiet in which to work. The underlying purpose of this house-clearing was the eminently practical one that, having reclaimed the child, he did not wish her to awaken into a frightening, confusing hubbub. The inevitable fright would do her added harm.

Further good sense is revealed in the simple words with which he called her back. Not with the majestic orotund

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of authority, but as gently as her mother might, in a quiet, reassuring voice he spoke, "Talitha cumi—Darling, get up!" The final touch of supreme good sense came when, having restored the girl to her parents, he commanded, "Give her something to eat." It did the wise thing of pulling the elated parents back to earth. This kept them from running about town showing off the child. It put them to work. Also, twelve-year-old girls after illness need the recuperating energy of food. The profound good sense of Jesus set the child's parents to providing it.

Jesus' practical wisdom continually crops out in the record of his other miracles. Puzzle over them as we must, this distinctive quality in Jesus is always manifest, and is in harmony with its expression in soberer stories. Sick people often become discouraged and sometimes hopeless. They need practical aid to restore their self-confidence. On meeting the man born blind, Jesus did not expect that unaided he could believe his sight would be restored. So Jesus "spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." Without the tangible aid of clay salve, in that day supposed to have restorative powers, probably nothing could have induced the man to believe he might gain his sight. At times Jesus extended more direct physical aid. When Peter's mother-in-law lay sick with fever, when Jairus' daughter lay prone on her mat, and when the epileptic boy fell prostrate and exhausted, Jesus took each of them by the hand to raise them up. Without that encouraging



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aid, probably none of them could have been persuaded to put forth the effort that confirmed their restoration.

Sometimes Jesus was even more drastic. He was forced to shock his patient into action. The man lying by the pool of Bethesda, lame for thirty-eight years, had plainly long since ceased trying to get into the water. Apparently he thought it was impossible, or useless, or he had come to prefer begging to being healed and going to work. One can still hear his whining excuse, "I have no man . . . . to put me into the pool." Suddenly he was shocked into self-realization. Like a clap of thunder came the challenge, "Do you *want* to be made whole?" Like an arrow the words hit their mark. Jesus' sharp words awoke the manhood sleeping in him. It was Jesus' common sense that restored and saved him.

No finer practical wisdom has ever been displayed than that of Jesus when facing his enemies. It takes more than quick wit to escape a succession of clever traps. Only the shrewdest sense can extricate a man from the snares of his foes. Facing him with the catch question, "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" the interrogators expected an argument. But the good sense of Jesus defeated them. To their amazement there was not one syllable of argument. At once Jesus got down to particulars. "Bring me a denarius," he demanded. "Whose is this image and superscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." One cannot argue against a solid coin. The

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case was closed, the rogues routed. Jesus' practical sagacity vanquished them.

Other opponents had to face the swift challenge of Jesus' remarkable good sense. "Who is my neighbor?" asked an expert in the Mosaic law. A fine chance for legal hair-splitting! But the debate never came off. Again Jesus, avoiding theory, got down to cases. In the parable of the good Samaritan he drew quickly a picture of true neighborly action. The opportunity to argue vanished. The learned legalist is forced into the humiliating necessity of answering his own poser in favor of his shrewder opponent.

As is to be expected, the practical Jesus admired such sanity wherever he found it, and lamented the lack of it. Certainly he admired the shrewdness of the unjust steward of his own parable. The rascal had practical sense enough to escape an apparent impasse and feather his nest for the future. On the other hand, anyone with a normal mentality but no more sense than to cast his pearls before swine deserved the rending he got. Jesus grieved that "the sons of this world are . . . . wiser than the sons of the light." Good men ought to be as sensible as those who make no pretense at piety. Likewise, the timid fool in the parable of the pounds, too slothful to realize the implications of his own knowledge, came in for castigation. To his lame excuse, "I feared thee, because thou art an austere man," came the swift dismissal, "Thou knewest." His failure to exercise plain good sense ruined him.



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This was the magnificent practical common sense of Jesus as they remembered him. Although he finally went to defeat and the agonies of Golgotha, that too proved to be highest wisdom. For not many weeks later his vitalized disciples began proclaiming him as the Wisdom of life. After twenty centuries other ways than his still lead to disaster.

It is no surprise to find that Jesus expected of his followers the same high sanity that was characteristic of himself. "Be ye wise as serpents," he commanded, "and harmless as doves."

No discussion of the chief qualities in Jesus as they remembered him would be complete without mention of his absolute unselfishness. Aside from his unique religiousness, it is the most characteristic thing about him. Like his spontaneous naturalness, it is doubly striking because it is so rare. Jesus never asked anything for himself. He gave away the strength of his body in healing, the energies of his mind in teaching, the assurance of his good reputation in unorthodox and lowly service, and the peace and security of his life in proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

He sought neither alliance with, nor support from, social and religious leaders who might have popularized and promoted his mission among the masses as the movement of the day. Among them he lost his repute, his influence, his good will, and even his right to worship in their synagogues. He accepted the company of chil-

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dren, widows, publicans, harlots, Samaritans, Romans, fishermen, toilers, and revolutionaries. He gave himself to the unfortunate, the sick, the crippled, the needy, the poor, the ignorant, the irreligious, and the sinful. From none of them could he hope to gain any personal advantage, or receive any reward save immaterial gratitude. Often they failed in that. They consumed his time, sapped his energy, compromised his reputation, and broke his heart. He spent his whole ministry *giving himself away*. He gave away his days, his thought, his strength, his services, his compassion, and finally both his body and his life. His was the most completely unselfish life ever lived.

This was the highest quality in Jesus as they remembered him. "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." "It is more blessed to give than to receive." That was his central glory. "He pleased not himself." "He emptied himself." He expected his followers to exhibit this same complete self-disregard. It was his last command. "I have given an example . . . . If I, then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet."



## CHAPTER TEN

# HIS PERFECTION

*"We beheld his glory"*

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STRICTLY SPEAKING, THERE IS NO MERE EARTHLY JESUS OF Nazareth in the gospels. There he is also the Son of God, radiant and perfect. The astonishing surprise of the resurrection and the revolutionizing experience of Pentecost glorified in the first believers their memories and understanding of the Palestinian Jesus. When their personal memories of him finally came to be written, he was no longer solely the man of Galilee; he was also the Lord of Glory. The man of Galilee can be clearly discerned, but he is perceived only through the shining of his deity.

There is, therefore, not a whisper of him in the gospels as a mere human being. Mark does not begin by declaring this is the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Rather he commences, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."<sup>1</sup> All that is said and done thereafter is the work of the Lord of Life. Matthew and Luke

<sup>1</sup> While the best ancient manuscripts omit "the Son of God," the whole gospel implies it.

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portray no human babe in Bethlehem. The child is the divinely conceived "Immanuel . . . . God with us" and "Jesus," a Saviour who shall redeem his people from their sins. The rest of their stories are not the tales of a hill-town artisan, but the mighty deeds of the Son of God. John omits all reference to a birth in the flesh, and posits Jesus' origin in the vast eternities. "In the beginning was the Word . . . . and the Word was God." The rest of the book is written, not to relate a human biography, but "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus was never remembered as merely the earthly carpenter of Nazareth. After Pentecost they began to see him in his glory, the glory of the Son of God, "full of grace and truth."

This is astonishing; for, as we have already seen,<sup>2</sup> the gospels clearly show that when he was among men, even his closest disciples thought both his deeds and judgment far from perfect. In their supposed greater wisdom they frequently tried to correct him. To them, he seemed fallible enough. Yet this humble Nazarene, sharply criticised in his own day, later stood forth in the minds of these same believers as the Anointed of God, the one altogether perfect.

Perhaps this perfection is most easily seen in the exact balance of his many virtues. Most persons are altogether lacking in certain qualities, and quite lopsided in others. The man has no patience, we say, or he is too generous

<sup>2</sup> In the chapter "His Unpopularity."



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for his own good. But in Jesus as they remembered him, and as they finally pictured him, no essential virtue was missing from his character and no necessary quality was overly marked. He held them all in even balance.

Consider, in the sum of them, how they perfectly balance each other. He was both stern and pitiful, courageous and cautious, practical and mystical, joyous and sorrowful, tranquil and emotional, candid and reserved, eloquent and silent, busy and unhurried, friendly and lonely—so the list extends—sharp and kindly, compassionate and stern, gay and solemn, considerate and demanding, radical and conservative, logical and poetic, strong and weary, intense and relaxed, patient and urgent, troubled and serene, unracial and Jewish, undoubting and perplexed, winsome and obstinate, simple and profound. The enumeration of his many virtues, each weighing evenly with the other, runs on almost without limit.

All of them can be amply illustrated from the stories of his life as they remembered him. Serenely he slept unafraid through the storm. Even his rude awakening by his disciples did not startle him. "Peace, be still . . . why are ye fearful?" Yet he was deeply troubled when he faced his friends at the Last Supper. "Now is my soul exceeding sorrowful." He was utterly unprejudiced against Greek, Roman, or Samaritan. It was to the Gentile centurion that he gave his supreme commendation, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Yet he confined his mission to "the lost sheep of Israel." Cautious in the face of danger, "he went away again be-

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yond Jordan"; but when the final crisis came, courageously "he set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem." So thronged was he that he "could not so much as eat bread"; yet on the return of his disciples, excited and tired from their first mission, he had the leisure to command them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." He taught with such eloquence that "the multitudes were astonished." Yet he was such a master of self-controlled silence that before his judges, who held his life or death in their hands, "he held his peace." So radical was he that he was commonly thought to be destroying the Law and the Prophets, yet he was conservative enough to bid men obey the word of those who "sit in Moses' seat." His keen logic quickly routed his detractors with its unanswerable, "If a house be divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand"; yet his poetic imagination blossomed in the exquisite, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow."

This portrayal of Jesus' amazing perfection of balanced qualities was not the result of an idealizing enthusiasm by enrapt worshipers. It roots in the daily words and deeds of the human Galilean carpenter. Startling as these characteristics appear, they are not the product of fanciful imaginings become rosy with faith in the heavenly Son of God. They were the earthly possessions of the mundane son of man. As one early believer wrote, "We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father."



## *JESUS AS THEY REMEMBERED HIM*

Jesus as they remembered him understood life perfectly. He only, of all persons who ever lived, knew the final answers to the fundamental questions life is forever asking. We see through a glass darkly. But Jesus saw the full, perfect, and sufficient answer to each of life's mysteries.

Basically life asks few ultimate questions. All the hosts of lesser queries turn out to be but sub-points of these few main interrogations. If they can be given perfect answers, perfectly related to each other, life can be perfectly understood. Is there a God? What kind of universe have we? What is man? How shall I live? Can there be relief from suffering? Can sin be cleansed and conquered? Does death end all?

Upon all these matters Jesus spoke with full finality. The glory of this achievement looms the greater when his perfect answers, in their perfect relation to each other, are set beside the insights of able but lesser thinkers. That these latter beheld the beautiful, the true, and the good is undeniable. "God hath not left himself without a witness," and there is always "the true light, even the light which lighteth every man coming into the world." But when the splendor of this great Sun of Righteousness shines forth upon these last, dark matters of the soul, they grow luminous with the perfect light of heaven. Feeble and partial are the broken lights of other gropers after truth. Jesus' answers alone are altogether perfect.

*Is there a God?* "None," says the atheist; "there is no God." "I do not know," says the agnostic; "for we can never be certain, and I give the conundrum up."

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"All is God," says the pantheist; "every created thing is a part of him." "There are many gods," says the polytheist, "myriads of them." "Only one God," says the monotheist, "but one God alone."

If there is a God, what is his nature and character? "He is fickle and cruel," says the pagan; "like ourselves, he is a mixture of good and evil." "He is an impersonality," says the Braham, "unmoved and unmoving." "He is high and far off," says the deist, "distant and unapproachable."

Then we hear the faultless answer of the lowly Palestinian artisan. For Jesus there is but one God who is "your heavenly Father." No more perfect conception is possible to the mind of man. We know God as the divine parent. "When ye pray, say, Abba, Father."

*What kind of universe have we?* "It is a blind machine," says the materialist, "without reason or meaning; it just happened." "It is an evil thing," says the dualist, "the subject and sport of evil force, corruptible and corrupting." "It is an illusion," reply certain mystics; "there is no abiding reality in it."

These insights pale into shadows when passed before the spotless light of Jesus' understanding. For him this world is the field of the Father's providential care. "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's notice." "If God doth so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you?" To Jesus nothing is too trivial for God's loving attention. His is the answer perfect. "Even the hairs of your head are numbered."



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"Behold the birds of the heaven . . . . your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?"

*What is man?* "He is a complexity of animated atoms," says the materialist, "just so much vitalized chemistry, here today and gone tomorrow, without purpose, moral freedom, or responsibility." "He is a spark from the World-Soul," says the pantheist, "soon to be remelted into the ultimate fire." "He is a psycho-physical organism," says the psychologist, "a house divided against itself, a bundle of appetites and passions, a complexity of contradictory ideas, emotions, and desires." The self-evident truth in some of these statements no one will deny. But they fall far short of the perfect insight of Jesus, who "knew what was in man."

Jesus saw that man is a potential child of God. "Your heavenly Father," carried with it the corollary, "Ye shall be sons of the Most High." It is the intent of his heavenly Father that man shall become a divine being. No higher view of man is possible. "As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God."

*How shall I live?* "Enjoy thyself," says the Epicurean; "eat, drink and be merry in sensible moderation." "Know thyself," says the Socratic philosopher; "be wise in self-understanding and live without surprise and without dismay." "Control thyself," says the Stoic; "attain self-mastery and be unconquered by life's disasters." "Suppress thyself," says the Buddhist; "abandon desire and find the peace that comes from wanting nothing." "Sub-

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merge thyself," says the Hindu; "be reabsorbed in Brahma, and forever lose troubled restlessness in that unconscious eternal calm." "Withdraw thyself," says the ascetic; "dwell apart and find rest by abandoning life's worries." "Glorify thyself," says the Nietzschean; "become a superman and luxuriate in the power and pomp denied to lesser souls." Each of these answers has been thoroughly tested, and each has proved its measure of failure.

All of them pale before the perfect word of Jesus. "Consecrate thyself," and become a child of God, a servant of men. Live in loving devotion to your heavenly Father and in sacrificial helpfulness to your brother man. In his genius, he took two separated insights of the Old Testament, combined them into one, enriched their meaning, and flung them at the feet of man. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength . . . thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

*Can there be relief in suffering?* "Conquer it," says the optimist; "it will develop your character and strengthen your soul." "Grin and bear it," says the Stoic; "there is nothing to be done about it, and since whining avails nothing, carry it with calm fortitude." "Adjust yourself to it," says the realist; "learn to live with it as a fellow if not a friend." "Understand it," says the philosopher; "then you will see it not as evil but as the darker side of good." "Ignore it," says the romanticist; "it is only an illusion of the imagination, a figment of mortal mind."



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"Be resigned to it," says the fatalist; "nothing can be done about it, and kicking against the pricks but makes it smart the worse." "Flee it," says the recluse; "avoid it as far as possible by quiet retreat from the hard warfare of active life." From these solutions, various types of men have found a measure of healing. Yet how imperfect they are! Either they force man to bear the burden of his suffering with broken heart and aching back, unassisted, or they offer the futile hope that he may escape the inescapable.

From Jesus came the flawless answer. "Let not your hearts be troubled." "I will come unto you." "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." "My peace I give unto you." Sorrow, disaster, defeat? Yes. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Ignore it, submit to it, fight against it, bear it alone? No. "I will send the Comforter," the Strengtheners, who shall walk beside you. This is the perfect solution of the human Jesus. When the goodness of heaven meets the woes of men there is nothing more that can be asked or offered. "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted."

*Can sin be cleansed and conquered?* "Do not mind it," says the secularist; "it is no responsibility of ours and we need do nothing about it." "Make propitiation for it," says the pagan; "appease your god with a sacrifice, pay him for the sin committed, and buy forgiveness." "Do good works," says the legalist; "keep the commandments, give alms, and earn forgiveness." "Say prayers," says

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the ritualist; "observe the ceremonies, keep the feasts and fasts, and be rewarded with moral cleansing." "Practice ecstatic devotion," says the mystic; "become lost in such wonder, love, and praise of mystic union that sin of itself departs." "Attain a noble character," says the moralist, "and by overcoming evil never need divine pardon." Since the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, men walking these paths have received some measure of pardon and moral power.

Set them beside the perfection of Jesus' insight; their imperfections are plain. There can be nothing beyond his declaration, "Your heavenly Father forgives." God is eager to forgive sin, and graciously offers moral power to conquer it. Those are the only two things that can be done with sin—forgive it and empower the victim to sin no more. Sin once committed can never be undone. Even apology and restitution often avail little, or are quite impossible. Sin can only be forgiven. Once forgiven, the helpless soul, surrounded by forces it cannot master, needs the inflooding of a divine power; otherwise forgiveness is but temporary, and finally in vain. But Jesus saw sin as forgivable and conquerable. It is cleansed by the graciousness of God's forgiving love, and kept at bay by the unconquerable power of his indwelling Spirit. This is all, but it is enough. This village woodworker gave the flawless answer. "Thy sins be forgiven thee." "Go and sin no more."

*Does death end all?* "Yes," says the annihilist; "there is nothing beyond the grave; life is threescore years and



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ten, and then the everlasting dark." "We are absorbed back into God," says the Buddhist, "lost again in him. Our little desiring consciousness ceases in his eternal peace." "We transmigrate from life to life," says the Hindu, "living from weary existence to weary existence, until finally Karma ceases and we are resubmerged in the unknowing Brahma." Such are the insufficient, groping answers, each to be forgotten in the glory of Jesus' perfect answer.

For Jesus, death meant being "where I am . . . with the Father." Thus man, who begins by being a potential son of God, ends by becoming an eternal companion with the Father. This was the insight of the Galilean teacher. Beyond this vision of eternal living in the presence of the heavenly Father the mind cannot go. "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

These, then, were the perfect answers of Jesus to the ultimate questions of life. One may receive them or reject them, rejoice in them or refuse them. But nothing better is conceivable. These are final answers, the highest, the last, the best. Taken each in its own sphere, and taken together as the total knowledge of life, they are true and perfect altogether. Jesus alone saw them all, saw them whole, saw them in relation, and put them at the heart of things here and hereafter. The human mind can grasp nothing higher, truer, or more glorious.

That an uneducated, obscure, hill-village carpenter, without special opportunity, training, or experience actually fathomed these mysteries would be utterly incred-

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ible were they not explicit in the record as they remembered him. Moreover, they are not the inspired words of the risen Lord of Glory, given by divine fiat to the apostles in an exalted experience in an upper room, as the Ten Commandments are said to have been given full-blown to Moses on Sinai. These were the teachings and insights of the carpenter Jesus as they remembered him in his earthly ministry. All thinking about life, man, the universe, God, and moral purpose reached its zenith in the mind of the earthly Nazarene. It is not to be wondered at that the later believers exclaimed, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

It was not alone in his penetration of life's mystery that Jesus manifested true perfection. He displayed it also in the universal perfection of his character. Like us, he bore the marks of earthly finitude. We can be quickly filed into our niche in history—white, North American, United States, English-speaking, early twentieth century. This is equally true of Jesus—Semitic, Aramaic-speaking, Palestinian, Galilean Jew, early first century, fixes him in place and time. These belong to the particular, not to the universal and perfect. But character is not in essence a matter of time, place, or custom. It has nothing directly to do with one's pigment or dialect. Goodness and mercy, courage, malice, and honesty are not the special properties of race, geography, and the calendar. They belong to all humanity in all ages and localities. Men have often



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manifested qualities of character far in excess of their environment and associates. It was the glory of Jesus as they remembered him that in his character he burst all bonds of time, place, race and circumstance. His was the universal perfection of a faultless character.<sup>3</sup>

A universal is a truth, fact, quality, or condition that is true in all time, place, and circumstance. That two times two makes four is a universal. It was true in ancient, Eastern, Persia; is so now in modern, Western, America; and it will be even ten thousand years in the future, in frigid Greenland. It is as true among the unlettered Hottentots who have no arithmetic as it is with Oxford mathematicians. "Thou shalt not steal," is a universal. It can be lived by any one, anywhere, any time, and life will flourish. But once let men abandon it, and soon everyone would be sitting on his little pile of possessions, gun in hand. Society would become a murderous chaos.

This is likewise true in matters of character. That sincere love never faileth was true when prehistoric men first began to know themselves as living souls, and it will be true in that distant day when men shall have beaten their swords into plowshares. It is equally true among the unschooled Eskimos, and the cultured classes of Europe. The tragedy of our own characters is that they never burst all their bonds of time and environment and

<sup>3</sup> This section is not to be taken as meaning that as he walked in Galilee his disciples realized his universality. They did not. Nor did he himself proclaim it. But in the gospels the universality of his Galilean living shines forth. It is not imported. He lived it. They recorded it. See Note VI, p. 219.

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reach their universal possibilities. Occasionally, for a moment, we escape our cramping limitations. Thus Lincoln, who never outgrew certain aspects of frontier boorishness, rose in his Second Inaugural to the glories of universal perfection. It was the glory of Jesus as they remembered him that his character manifested that complete universality we call perfection.

He did not live within the restricted social customs of his day. His day believed in narrow class, race, and sex distinctions. Good men did not associate with publicans, sinners, Gentiles, Samaritans, nor with women in public. If men did, it was public proof that they were not good men. Jesus strode cross-lots over such barriers. Never is it necessary to apologize for him, as one does for the slave-holding Washington, with the extenuation, "It was the accepted custom of his day." What Jesus was and lived was universally perfect. Such a life can be lived everywhere, at any time, among any people, without apology.

He ministered to the Roman centurion, sat on the well curb in friendly conversation with the Samaritan woman, ate as a social equal with the publican Zacchaeus and Simon the Pharisee, consorted with unabashed delight with irreligious "sinners" all as freely and gladly as though he were enjoying the companionship of his disciples or the kindly hospitality of his Bethany friends. He was neighbor to everyone, and he accepted neighborliness from everybody. His neighborliness was not, after the fashion of his day, limited to decent, pious fellow-Jews. For him,



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everyone in need was a neighbor. When one is neighbor to all and receives neighborliness from all, that is one aspect of perfection. Everyone who chooses may live like that. Against it there is no moral law. Jesus did not live within the petty confines of Jewish first century standards. His living and character were universal, perfect.

Other aspects of his character were likewise universal and perfect. One never need apologize for him as one must for Paul's subjugation of women, blaming Paul's rabbinical training and explaining what is true, that it was so firmly the custom of the time that decency made its enforcement obligatory. Jesus said nothing about slavery, war, economic systems, and military dictatorships; but he lived above these sorry evils on the heights of universal perfection, where those who choose may likewise live. He refused to carry a sword. He would not defend himself. He was shocked to discover two of his disciples carrying concealed weapons. He forbade anger, hate, and retaliation. He refused every method that might, by a violent revolution, make him a king. His whole life of utter self-giving was a complete denial of economic systems that aim to make the few rich and maintain a privileged class. His living was on the universal plane, open to any who seek no power, property, or place. He asked only for unrestricted opportunity to give himself away for the good of all men.

This universal perfection of Jesus' living shines out with luminous clarity when one contrasts it with such practices of his day as retaliation, ritual washings, and

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Sabbath keeping. The ancient retaliatory law of an eye for an eye had ruled since Moses. Oaths were rated as less binding, or more binding, according to the sacredness of the things sworn by. The Sabbath, with its petty regulations, was so tied with ecclesiastical red tape that its value as a day of rest and worship was seriously compromised. Into this medley of petty practices stepped Jesus with his human-wide universality. He saw that even limited retaliation was disastrous. "For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again." A fusillade of bricks will not return as a shower of bouquets, but a heavy hail of stones. Hate cannot be cured with hate, but only with kindness. Only the holy retaliation of good will can be effective. Therefore, "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you."

As for oaths, what was needed to restrict the scheming chicaneries of men was a complete inner honesty that would make any oath-taking unnecessary. "Swear not at all . . . but let your speech be, Yea, yea: Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of evil." As for the Sabbath, it was not created as a day of regulations to test man's powers of obedience. It was given to man, a glad, free day for his deepest needs and best good. "The Sabbath was made for man."

These principles of living are universal perfection, true always, everywhere. It is never wrong to love; it is always right to be honest; and a Sabbath set free for man's highest enrichment will ever be right. These can be accepted



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by anyone without let or hindrance, to his own and his neighbor's good. The quality of Jesus' living was limited to no era, and it bore the tag of no epoch. It belonged to the universal perfection of life.

It was in the high realm of Jesus' religious living that his universal perfection as they remembered him came to its shining glory. Jesus' religious living belonged not to first century Palestine, but to the eternities. His day believed in divine transcendence, ritualism, and salvation by good works. God was high and lifted up. His very name was too exalted to be directly mentioned. It was indicated always by such circumlocutions as "Heaven" and "the Most High." Scheduled prayers, set fastings, careful washings, stated tithes, required sacrifices, public alms, and strict Sabbath observance were the supposed essentials of religion. It was not, "Do you love God and keep the commandments?" but, "Did you wash up to your elbows before eating?"

Amid these narrow particularities Jesus moved with his accustomed universalism. Instead of the divine Transcendence to be worshiped afar off, by the circumcised only, he proclaimed the infinite Father of all men. Instead of the intricacies of ritualism, he preached a religion of personal fellowship, manifesting itself in consecrated love to the Father of Lights, and in practical service to brother men. Instead of salvation by the moral bookkeeping of good works, he set forth the undeserved, free grace of the Father. Perfect universals all, that can become the life and practice of every condition of men everywhere!

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This was the universal character of Jesus as they remembered him. It was not the limited faith and life of the first century Jew. Jewish scholars are right in accusing Jesus of overstepping the boundaries of Judaism into the universalities of life. He was not a true Jew, they assert, and they are right. Nor was he a westernized modern whose belief and practice belong to ecclesiastical Catholicism or divided, sectarian Protestantism. He no more belongs to our nationalistic Christianity than he did to sacrificial Judaism. His religion and living were neither Jew nor Greek, circumcised nor uncircumcised, bond nor free, male nor female, Eastern nor Western, Catholic nor Protestant, capitalist nor communist, but all things to all men. His was a universal religious living that may be accepted by peoples everywhere and always.

Not only are these towering qualities seen in the risen Lord of Life, but they were the definite, historical characteristics of the son of man. They were revealed as he walked about in his daily journeyings. They are the memories of him as one who once ate and drank and walked among men, and whose eating, drinking and walking were frequently severely criticised. Jesus belonged to no era, no race, no people, no creed, in the perfection of his living. As a later writer declared of him, he was "the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

This deeper perfection of Jesus reached its pinnacle in his perfect unity with his Father. With us, God is partly



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obscure. We see him through a glass darkly. With Jesus as they remembered him God was the most vivid of realities. He knew God so completely that he knew him *naturally*. Before his Father he walked with reverence and freedom.

This unity with his Father was so complete that every common sight turned his mind toward God. He was a religious Croesus turning into spiritual gold all he saw and felt. Here was a sparrow dead in the path, the victim of attack, storm, or disease, not meriting a second thought. But to Jesus it spoke with eloquence of the Father's love for his human children. "No one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father . . . ye are of more value than many sparrows." The common grass, trodden under foot of men, cropped by sheep and goats or cast into the oven for fuel, green and gorgeous in the spring, but dried to a toast brown under the red breath of the searing sirocco, was to Jesus proof sown across the hills of the Father's providential care. "If God doth so clothe the grass of the field . . . shall he not much more clothe you?"

Children, dirty, careless, quarreling at their play in the marketplace, slapped by parents and scolded by neighbors, noisy, rude, animated bundles of future good or evil—they were the watchful concern of their heavenly Father. "Their angels do always behold their Father in heaven." A shepherd, wearily plodding home, rejoicing in the recovery of his wayward sheep, was a parable on the Father's eagerness to redeem his lost children. "Even

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so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth."

This same perfect unity leaps from the pages of John. In the Synoptics every common thing—salt and cities, growing crops and yeast, pearl merchants and prodigal boys—all set Jesus' mind tingling with thoughts of God. So in John wine and water, light and sheep, vines, branches, and bread reminded him of his Father. As naturally as some men think of their stomachs Jesus thought and lived with God. This unity was so perfect that the writer of John with sure insight summed it up in that great assertion of moral unity, "I and my Father are one."

This phase of Jesus' perfection becomes more vivid when we reflect how broken is our union with the Father and how timid our obedience to his will. No relation between ourselves and God ever approaches perfection. But with Jesus it was without flaw. It centered, as we have seen,<sup>4</sup> in his complete obedience to his Father's will. Against occasional uncertainties, in the face of mounting difficulties, in spite of strongest disinclination, he did the will of God fully. Again, the author of John summarizes exactly this perfect obedience of Jesus as portrayed in the Synoptic scenes: "I always do the things that are pleasing to him."

This perfect unity between Jesus and his Father shone its brightest from the darkness of the cross. It is little

<sup>4</sup> In the chapter "His Motives."



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short of blasphemy to describe Jesus' cry, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," as "a cry of dereliction." In Jesus' last crisis did his Father desert him? Does he who marks the sparrow's fall desert his own in their hour of *obedient* suffering? Rather, this cry of Jesus is the opening line of an old hymn he had known since childhood, the Twenty-second Psalm. It begins with this cry of despair, but it ends with a shout of triumphant faith. To declare that these opening words witness to a "dereliction" is as false as to say that if an old saint upon dying began whispering, "Abide with me, fast falls the eventide, the darkness deepens," and there ceased, it demonstrates that he died darkly doubting, without the comfort of God. We know that Jesus sang his way into his Father's presence with a song of trust.

Jesus died singing! He pillowed his suffering on the hymns of his faith. There on the cross during his most agonizing hour, Jesus' union with his Father reached its supreme perfection. He died calling its triumphant reality. "Abba! Father!"

This is the ultimate perfection. In Jesus the mind and will of God found perfect understanding and perfect expression. A carpenter among men, threadbare and sandal-footed, with flashing eye and pealing voice, the harrassed and martyred Galilean once walked with such unassuming universal perfection among men that "when their eyes were opened they knew him" as the perfect Son of God. They surrendered all their lesser terms, as

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Teacher and Rabbi, in the adoring ascription, "It is the Lord!"

But even this was not the end. Gradually his perfection began to become their perfection. He was the Light, and in his light they began to see the light. The perfection he had manifested under the hard limits of his earthly environment began to break the narrow bounds of their provincial living and move them out into the universality of his perfect living. The perfect unity of his relation with the Father, challenging them from the lofty words of his beatitudes, and growing in them as the fruits of the Spirit, began to perfect in them their knowledge and love of God. His perfection was becoming their perfection, making possible in them and in others the fulfillment of his own command, "Ye shall be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect."



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### HIS GOSPEL

*"The power of God unto salvation"*

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NONE OF THE FOREGOING CHAPTERS, NOR ALL OF THEM TOGETHER, is the "Gospel." The Gospel has nothing to do with the mud and stone materials of Jesus' Nazareth home. It has no relation whatever to the possible color of his eyes, the ancient form of his baptism, the swift working of his mind, the misfortune of his unpopularity, nor the brilliance of his extraordinary common sense. These chapters are but the prelude to the Gospel. They begin where Peter and the other disciples began, with the Nazarene Carpenter in Galilee. For like them we must always begin in Galilee. Like them we must go on from Galilee to the empty tomb, and from the empty tomb to Pentecost—and from Pentecost to the Gospel.

Literally, the Gospel means the "Good News." In the New Testament it is a technical word covering all that the first believers experienced in their contact with the Galilean son of man, the inflooding Spirit at Pentecost, and the transforming presence of the Son of God. The

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Good News is, therefore, a large term—so large no one has ever succeeded in exactly defining it. It is like a vast mountain range of many majestic peaks, only one aspect of which can be glimpsed at one time. From different directions it appears to be an utterly different range. No one person has ever succeeded in scaling all its peaks or encompassing all its majesty. The Gospel is like life, light, love, words whose meaning can be richly experienced and described, but never completely defined.

As is to be expected, different men, awed by different aspects of the Good News and approaching it from differing backgrounds and experiences, have described it under varying terms. Jesus, with his Jewish background, called it the "Kingdom of God." In Acts the first believers called it the "Way." Paul, with his Gentile experience, named it "Salvation." In John it was referred to in Greek terms as "Eternal Life." These four terms are not different in meaning. They are synonyms for the Good News.

It is not only because the Gospel is larger than the reach of men's minds that its formulation is difficult. Jesus as they remembered him never spoke of it as the "Gospel." He talked of the "Kingdom." He did not proclaim, "Hear the Good News"; he declared, "The Kingdom of God is like. . . ."

On the surface he apparently contradicted himself. The Kingdom, he said, "is within you." It was not something men must search after, for "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Yet men could have



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the Kingdom only by diligent seeking and strenuous effort. "Strive to enter in," and "seek ye first the kingdom." Apparently, as his first believers remembered it, the Kingdom is here and now "in the midst of you," but also it was in the future, for men must pray "Thy kingdom come."

Since the Good News was never outlined into an organized system, and since it is broader than the measure of man's mind, there never has been exact agreement as to precisely what the Good News means. Therefore, no final statement can be given concerning it in this chapter. Only an outline of the major attempts to clarify it is possible.

The obvious place to begin is by noting that originally the gospels themselves were put forth as expositions of the "Gospel." All that they contain is the Gospel. Each gospel is really saying "All of me is the Gospel." Mark frankly commences, "The beginning of the Gospel." Everything that follows, from John's heralding to Jesus' ascension, is the Gospel. "All that Jesus began both to do and to teach" and to be—that is the Gospel. All that he said by way of teaching, parable, and warning; all that he did in encouraging, strengthening, and healing; all that he was in compassion, consecration, and sacrifice; all that he did for men in inspiring hope, transforming character, and revealing God—all that is the Good News. Each of the gospels is the Gospel.

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Another place to seek it in its original purity is in the Apostolic Church. What did that church from the impact of Jesus as they remembered him consider the Good News to be?

In the opening chapters of Romans, Paul describes the Gospel about as clearly and succinctly as is possible. He bases it upon half a dozen profound propositions. First, the world is hopelessly and helplessly wicked. It both refuses to recognize and is incapable of appreciating the goodness of God or the moral order. The first word of the Gospel then is: *This Wicked World*.

Next, the world is morally impotent. In the midst of his calamity man finds himself powerless. Worse, whenever he tries by painful struggle to do better, he corrupts both his effort and his work. He increases his plight. The Jews, though they had the Law, in their keeping of it perverted it until it blinded them to God instead of bringing them to him. The Greeks, receiving their revelation through nature, instead of rising to fuller life, twisted it into baser living. The second word of the Gospel, then, is: *This Paralyzed World*.

Third, God himself came to the rescue of this sinning, shackled world. Through Jesus Christ, of his own free grace he entered the life of man to redeem him. Help had to come from without. Man could not save himself. God offered himself in an act of cosmic self-sacrifice. This is the Gospel's third word: *This Savable World*.

The fourth word of the Gospel declares that God made this invasion of his sacrificing love through the earthly



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life of Jesus of Nazareth. That is why the gospels are the Gospel, the Good News. They are more than an account of the earthly career of Jesus. They are interpretations of that life as God's invasion into human life to meet man's sin and helplessness. The promises of prophecy are fulfilled. The day of God has come. Jesus lived, he died, he rose, he ascended, he sent his spirit, and he will come again. That is the gospel story, the story of "Immanuel . . . . God with us." This is the fourth Gospel word: This God-invaded World.

The Gospel's fifth word is that through this inbursting of God man may receive a new life with Christ in God. Man becomes a new creature in Christ, a new species. He need no longer be a mere human being, helpless in his sin, but a child of God and more than conqueror. Like Jesus, his human nature has been "transfigured." He becomes a partaker of the divine nature. So the fifth Gospel word is: This Regenerated World.

The Gospel's sixth word is that God will continue his invasion of human life. It is the Gospel's final offer. It appears in many forms in the New Testament. Sometimes it is called the "Judgment Day," sometimes the "Second Coming of Christ." Sometimes it is an almost lurid, compulsory dominance of God on earth, and sometimes it is an apocalyptic picture of the overthrow of evil. Certainly it was part of the original Gospel. Vary as these conceptions do, their meanings are one. God is continuing his amazing invasion of human life. Man is not left with the story of a distant redemptive act. He is

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not left to a long, discouraging, uneven evolution. God is "Immanuel," with us in mighty power, conquering and to conquer. Hence the Gospel's final word: This Redeemed World.

Thus the Gospel appears as an interrelation of profound propositions about human sin, the grace of God, and the life of Jesus. At once the problem arises: How far do these propositions represent the Good News as Jesus proclaimed it? Is this the message of Jesus, or the Gospel of the first century believers? At least it represents, within the lifetime of many who remembered him, an exposition of Jesus' Gospel.

There is yet another road by which men seek an exact statement of the Good News. It leads to the conclusion that the Gospel lies in Jesus himself. Jesus is the Good News. The Gospel lodges in a personality. It resides in Jesus. That he once lived, and taught, and died, and rose, and lives again—that is the Good News. Jesus Christ is the Gospel.

The New Testament bears witness to this. Peter and the other disciples did not begin with a set of beliefs and teachings that were the Gospel. They joined in fellowship with Jesus. The power that transformed the woman at the well was her personal contact with the Man of Galilee. The excitement created by the new movement, as pictured in Acts, was aroused by the compulsion of a new life through Jesus Christ. Paul's transformation came on the Damascus Road when he was met face to face by



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the risen, exalted Christ. In the New Testament Jesus is the Gospel. He is himself the Good News.

The great foci of this gospel message were the two climactic events in Jesus' earthly life, his death and his resurrection. His passion was both the beginning and the climax of the earliest Christian Gospel. The cross—he died. The tomb—he was buried. The first Easter—he arose. His ascension—he was exalted. His coming again—he will reign in power.

At once certain conclusions followed. He is Messiah and Saviour. He fulfilled the purpose and promise of God. His life was a mighty act of God to rescue men from the terrors of sin, demons, and death. Thus, while the Gospel is about Jesus, Jesus is the Gospel.

A second glance into the New Testament bears further witness that Jesus himself is the Good News. Everything that happens in the experience of the first believers comes to pass through him. This can be perfectly illustrated by striking parallels between incidents in the gospels and the experience of Paul. Amid the alarms made terrible by the devastating, untamed powers of nature, it is Jesus who stands regnant, able to cast out fear from his terrorized followers with his, "Peace, be still . . . why are ye fearful?" Years later, on the wild Mediterranean, Paul finds in Jesus the same peace amid nature's fury. To his wet, cold, fearful shipmates he stands forth for his Lord: "I exhort you be of good cheer . . . for there stood by me this night an angel of God . . . saying, Fear not . . . wherefore be of good cheer." The assur-

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ance of Galilee and the reassurance on the Mediterranean are one in Christ.

In the gospels the lock grip of disease that kept the woman bound for eighteen years and the man by the pool of Bethesda impotent for thirty-eight years is broken by the power of Jesus. Years later this foremost of the apostles won his victory over the thorn in his flesh through this releasing power of Jesus. He heard the empowering word, "My strength is sufficient for thee," and he learned that, "I can do all things through him that strengtheneth me." Back in the gospels again, it is Jesus who offers forgiveness of sins to the paralytic. Forward once more with Paul, it is the same risen Christ who releases him from sin. To his agonized cry, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death?" he sings back joyously of the forgiveness he has found, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Again, it is Jesus in the gospels who frees men from the tangles of ritualism, washings, fastings, and set prayers. "Can the companions of the bridegroom fast, while the bridegroom is with them?" "For there is nothing from without the man that goeth into him can defile him." Again, this apostle to the Gentiles, held in the bondage of the Law, verified in himself that Jesus was the source of true liberty. "Ye are called to freedom . . . for freedom did Christ set you free."

Once more, in the gospels it was Jesus who was the master of demons, those invisible malicious spirits who were supposed to invade life and spread havoc every-



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where. Again, this converted rabbi, himself a staunch believer in demon-possession, found in his experience in Jesus that demons had lost their power. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood . . . . for I am persuaded that neither . . . . angels nor principalities . . . . nor powers . . . . nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Finally, in the gospel stories again, it is Jesus who vanquishes life's last dread enemy, death. He routs it at Nain, Capernaum, and Bethany. He meets it in himself on Golgotha, and in the tomb he conquers it. And his most energetic apostle, facing the laments of the first converts, proclaims that Jesus is still the victor of death. "Death is swallowed up in victory . . . . thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "We shall be changed. And so shall we ever be with the Lord." When Paul came at last to face the time of his own departure, he knew that death was ever more the victim and Jesus forever the victor. "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come . . . . henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness."

Thus, in both the gospels and the experience of Paul as representative of the first Christians, over every dark fact in life Jesus is victor. He is the Gospel. The writers of his story were conscious of it. The Good News is not only his teachings, his deeds, his fragmentary biography, but he himself. So Matthew represents him as

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standing on a mountain in Galilee bidding no final farewell, but offering himself. "Lo, I am with you always." Likewise, John pictures him promising in the upper room, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you. . . . In a little while and ye shall see me." The Gospel, say the gospels, is Jesus himself. He is the Good News. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved."

These, then, are some of the insights into the meaning and purpose of the Good News. It is the "Kingdom" of Jesus, the "Salvation" of Paul, the "Life" of John, the "Way" of Acts, and the "Good News" of the gospels. It bursts all definitions. It escapes all formulae. It defies complete analysis. It exceeds all our poor powers of comprehension. Yet, if a descriptive phrasing may be ventured, it would go something like this: The Kingdom of God is an old Jewish phrase which under the inspiration of Jesus comes in the New Testament to mean all that God proposes for men and society. All that is ultimately possible for each human soul both now and eternally, and all that is possible for human society to become, that, by the grace and sacrifice of God, is the Kingdom of God, Salvation, and Eternal Life. That is the Gospel. "*It is the power of God!*"

Therefore, "Repent ye, and believe in the Gospel."



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### HIS ACHIEVEMENTS

*"I have finished the work"*

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IN THE MINDS OF THE FIRST BELIEVERS, THE ACHIEVEMENTS of Jesus as they remembered him were never confined to his earthly life. What he did in Galilee was merged in their memories with what he continued to do as their risen Lord of Life. There is, then, no account in the gospels of Jesus' attainments merely as a man. The memory of them was never limited in their significance to his Palestinian days. They are set forth as cosmic in meaning and eternal in effect. It is therefore next to impossible to delineate Jesus' work within the confines of his earthly career. His accomplishments blend with the declarations of faith.

In a different way this is true of lesser men than Jesus. The calamities Napoleon brought upon Europe and the blessings Lincoln conferred upon America were not limited to their generations. Had they been, these men would be without importance today. Men are significant only when their works continue to be effective long after their earthly

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careers have ended. What they continue to achieve after they are gone is of far more importance than what they completed while living. The early believers were right, then, in regarding in their memories of Jesus not only what he was as he walked in Galilee, but what his influence continued to mean after his crucifixion.

But it is always necessary to study any person's attainments within the limits of his lifetime. Otherwise the consummation of his work in after years cannot be justly evaluated. We must, therefore, as best we can, attempt an estimate of all that Jesus of Nazareth as they remembered him effected within the years of his earthly ministry.

Any man's significance lies in both what he was in himself and what he did—in both his personality and his work. They are not always well-balanced, one often exceeding in importance the other. In both Samuel Johnson and Brother Lawrence, their characters outweigh their achievements. They are better known for their qualities as men than for what they accomplished. At other times it is quite the opposite. Though we know little of Shakespeare's or Buddha's personalities, what they did towers on the landscape of history. At other times, as in the case of John Wesley, the personality and the work are on more equal planes, each matching the other.

In Jesus, as we have seen in other matters concerning him, the strength of personality and the sum of achievement are in perfect balance. What he was and what he



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did are complementary. No one ever achieved as much, and no one ever amazed his contemporaries with as remarkable a personality. This glory of character has been fully described in the previous chapters on "His Distinctive Qualities" and "His Perfection." Here only its characteristic impressiveness needs discussion.

Jesus as they remembered him was history's most impressive personality. It shines resplendent from the gospel pages. As we saw in the chapter, "His Emotions," it was rich in a wide variety of moods, and expressed itself with telling power. It stamped itself upon all conditions of men. The noble Nicodemus began his interview with the sincere compliment, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God." Though Johannine in tone, it doubtless echoes what many people whom Jesus had helped must actually have said. In a glad hallelujah, the woman at the well cried to her townspeople, "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did." It was more than Jesus' superb handling of her case that aroused her enthusiasm. It was the profound impression of his personality upon her. The temple guards sent to arrest Jesus returned empty handed. When brought to account, they confessed, "Never man so spake." It was not his speech alone that overpowered them, for speech often repels. It was the surprising drive back of his words that hypnotized the guards.

As Jesus' majestic personality fills the Fourth Gospel, so does it the Synoptics. Repeatedly the multitudes were

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astonished at both his deeds and his teachings. At times, being greatly puzzled, they commented, "We have seen strange things." At other times they asked, "What mean these things?" Here was one whose personality, met face to face, was too vast to encompass.

What drove the money-changers from the temple? An improvised whip of strings? Never. The qualms of evil consciences? Hardly. The menacing threats of hostile bystanders? In part, perhaps. But what drove those temple traders forth? The gospel inference is clear. It was the aroused Jesus, alone and single-handed, ablaze with anger at the iniquity of the temple traffic, who struck them as an earthquake, and scattered them in panic.

This singular impressiveness of Jesus nearly conquered Pilate. A sophisticated man of the world, Pilate had met many important people. Also, he was used to every sort of criminal. But the presence of Jesus was something new. Amid the roaring of the mob and the howling of his vehement accusers, Jesus stood in silent calm, poised, uncowed. It was the silent strength of this fearless personality that temporarily conquered the vacillating Roman governor. Back of Pilate's hesitant verdict, "I find no fault in him," was Jesus' strength of character.

Even the tortures of the cross could not obliterate the power of Jesus' personality. There it came to its full glory. One of the thieves crucified with him, sensing its power, sought and received its ministration. The centurion standing guard, long used to seeing men die, was caught by its spell. As Jesus expired this hardened officer



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exclaimed, "Certainly, this was a righteous man." Even in the pain of death, Jesus' personality reigned majestic. This impression of his awesome presence crept into the resurrection stories. The two disciples, hurrying back from the astonishing revelation at the Emmaus supper, mused, "Was not our heart burning within us, while he spake to us in the way?"

This was the personality of Jesus as they remembered him. It was his greatest gift to men. It outshone all his words, acts, and even his ideals. What he was far outweighed all that he did. The most important thing about him was himself. Hence his command, "Come unto *me*."

Jesus as they remembered him was a genius in living. He lived life out to its fullest implications. He, more than any man, took from life all life has to offer. A bare enumeration of his many-sided activities reveals how completely he encompassed the full circle of life. Carpenter, teacher, preacher, healer, thinker, doer, dreamer, mystic, nature-lover, poet, friend of women, lover of children, comrade of sinners, consoler of the unfortunate, servant of the needy, helper of the poor, leader of men, emissary of God—all things to all men.

This extraordinary range of living Jesus began under the hard handicaps of life in Nazareth. He possessed no special privileges. He was subject to the stern conditions of human experience.

He began as a babe. As a helpless infant he came into

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the world, without knowledge, experience, or the power of self-care.

He grew. His only way of progress was by slow, painful instruction and learning, trial and error.

He dwelt in an artisan's house. It was doubtless the stone and mud dwelling of an ordinary home, burdened with the worrisome problems incident to the support of a large family.

He was environed by a small village. It was somewhat out of the way, distant from the larger towns of its province, and far from the lordly capital Jerusalem. It was devoid of urban advantages. Its inhabitants were small town folk, prejudiced, narrow, and capable at times of brutal action.

He toiled. As a carpenter he earned his living, experiencing the monotonous manual labor of the carpenter shop.

He sought companionship. He needed the friendship of his fellows. He welcomed every condition of person, from the despised publican, Zacchaeus, to the understanding Mary of Bethany; from joyous children to hearty company at banquet tables.

He never married. He was denied a home of his own, wife, children and friendly roof-tree, all so dear to the Jewish and the human heart. Homeless, he was dependent upon the hospitality of other homes. When these failed, he had not where to lay his head.

He worshiped. He observed the current religious customs. He studied and learned the Scriptures. He at-



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tended, "as his custom was," the synagogue services; he kept the stated national feasts, and made the annual pilgrimages to the great Temple.

He prayed. He needed help from God. Life was too terrible to manage alone, and too vast to fathom unaided. He needed the strength and wisdom of his Father.

He suffered. He experienced life's sharpest trials and misfortunes—temptation, perplexity, misunderstanding, unpopularity, opposition, failure, and martyrdom.

He died. He was martyred in the full glory of his early manhood, without the comfort of a bed or the ministrations of friends, high on a cross, amid the jeers of enemies and the raw blasts of a chill spring wind. He knew neither the satisfactions of middle life, nor the serenity of age.

These eleven circumstances conditioned Jesus' life.<sup>1</sup> Denied all special advantages, limited far more in his daily fortunes than many average-situated people today, afflicted by misfortune, he lived his life out to its farthest reaches. With what perfect understanding of its possibilities and its mysteries he comprehended it, the chapter on "His Perfection" has shown. As they remembered and depicted him, no other person experienced life so deeply and widely. He, more than any other, displayed how vast are the dimensions of life. He showed, too, how in spite of cramped conditions, life may be pushed to its full circumference.

<sup>1</sup> I owe this approach, and some of the items, to Professor Edwin Lewis.

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This amazing alive-ness fascinated those about him. Youthful men like the rich young ruler and aged dignitaries like Nicodemus came to him seeking life. In spite of their advantages of wealth and their prerogatives of position, he had outranged them in the genius of his living. So grand was the scale of Jesus' living, and so vital was the life he imparted, that to the first believers he himself became their definition of life. He knew life, had life, gave life. "In him was life." As one early writer stated it, "He that hath the Son, hath life."

Jesus as they remembered him showed men the immensity of salvation. He said, they recalled, that that was why he had come. "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Too commonly the need of salvation has been confined to sin. And sin is often left in vagueness, defined in abstract theological terms, or confined to a conventionalized list of wrongdoing. Jesus put no such circumscribed limits upon salvation. He came to save the whole man. It was his glorious achievement that he gave salvation a life-wide meaning.

To be wholly saved men's bodies need invigorating. Jesus saw that physical calamities prevented men from realizing life in its fullness. Therefore he gave much of his strength to restoring health. The memories of the first believers are full of the surprise of his healing deeds. He opened the eyes of the blind, unstopped deaf ears, cleansed the lepers, strengthened the lame, fed the hungry, clarified disordered minds, gave rest to the worn. Whatever dif-



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faculties one may have with these miracles, it is still undeniable that Jesus ministered to bodily health. Men could not experience full salvation, in Jesus' opinion, while illness afflicted them.

For full salvation, also, Jesus declared that men's minds must be illuminated. The receiving of good health is never the sum of salvation. It might, instead, become the beginning of worse wrongdoing. A robust man may be a lordly sinner. Hence Jesus' warning, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee." The restoring of health alone is insufficient. Man needs more than medicine and food. "Man shall not live by bread alone."

Hence, Jesus as they remembered him came teaching. Teaching challenges the intellect. Continually Jesus required men to think. Unceasingly he sought to correct their mistaken ideas. Unremittingly he strove to save their minds. There could be no complete salvation where minds were dull, thoughts evil, and thinking twisted. "What think ye?" "How readest thou?" was his repeated challenge. "How much, then, is a man of more value than a sheep?" "Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good?" "How can Satan cast out Satan?" "What shall it profit a man?" Jesus asked questions. To answer them, men had to think.

Bad thinking, and no thinking, Jesus saw, ruined men. Their minds must be saved. One of the most pitiable characters in his parables came to ruin because he did not use his head. Honest and reliable though he was, his thoughtlessness undid him. He had been given "one

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pound" which he "kept laid up in a napkin: for," as he excused himself to his overlord, "I feared thee, because thou art an austere man." That confession, which he thought an ample excuse, brought his doom. Back came the swift condemnation, "Thou knewest I was an austere man!" The implication is, You should have pondered the meaning of what you knew, and acted with wisdom upon it. But you didn't! Therefore, "cast ye the unprofitable servant" out! It was his thoughtlessness, not any crime, that lost him salvation.

As has been noted in the chapter on "His Mind," Jesus demanded not only loyalty of affection, earnestness of soul and activity of strength, but also energy of mind. The first and great commandment insists as much upon an enlightened mind as a loving heart. Only enlightened minds can experience that full salvation whereby "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Again, Jesus insisted that economic conditions must be purified before men could be saved. This too often is overlooked, but not by Jesus. To him, the economic effects of poverty and wealth spelled ruin. As a manual laborer, living among people of restricted means, he knew the spiritual as well as the physical tragedy of poverty. As a guest at the banquet tables of wealth, he observed how riches smothered nobler aspirations.

The moral tragedy of poverty looks out from his parables and speaks through his experiences. The prodigal son, his money gone, sits in hunger and rags, "and he



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would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat." Lazarus, in tatters and filthy, begs near the rich man's table. The unemployed stand idle in the market place, begging work. As long as such poverty remains, Jesus implied, there can be no full salvation. As evidence that the age-long promises were being fulfilled, he proclaimed, "The poor have good tidings preached to them."

However, the tragedies of wealth are far greater. Poverty started the prodigal son homeward to his father, but wealth debarred the rich young ruler from discipleship. He was married to his money. In Jesus' parables, the rich come off badly. Simon the Pharisee, with all his possessions, proved to be a discourteous boor and a self-righteous snob. Robed in purple and fine linen, the callous rich man in the parable sat at his sumptuous meals, ignoring the pathetic Lazarus. Gold had smothered his fountains of compassion. The rich fool of another parable worshiped his belly. As long as they clung to their money, such men could know no salvation.

It will be asserted that Jesus laid down no economic program. This is indisputable. Also it is without contradiction that forever the Kingdom of God stands in judgment over every economic system. Nor can it be denied that Jesus' mission "to seek and to save that which was lost" concerned both the poor and the rich. Unable to give the poor material help, Jesus gave them an enlargement of inner resources. These would help them live abundantly amid the stark needs forced upon them

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by the avarice of others. Also it would enable them to live simply and wisely should better times come.

Jesus saw, also, that as long as men were enthralled by wealth their salvation was hopeless. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!" "With men it is impossible." Jesus suggests that only by a stupendous miracle which would tax the power of the Almighty could salvation enter into palaces. Though it is not likely to happen, it can occur, "for all things are possible with God." But the risk is dangerous. It is far wiser to "lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth."

To the poor, the rich, and the middle class, salvation can come only when men cease to be anxious for the morrow. Worried about food, and distraught about clothes, men must learn that such things will be *added* only as they obey the injunction, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God."

Finally, before there can be full salvation, Jesus knew that men's sins must be forgiven and their moral will strengthened. Salvation means moral cleansing and empowering. Our notion of sin is usually limited to conventional social condemnations. Beyond these, few go. But in the gospels the range set forth by Jesus is vastly wider.

There are, of course, those grosser sins which all men recognize—the brutal, the thieving, the drunken, the murdering, the foolish. Jesus never mitigated their wickedness. He first stood the religious rich young ruler up



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against the Ten Commandments. Had he stolen, committed adultery, murdered, or borne false witness? Before he could expect to enter "eternal life" he must have kept these prerequisites as a matter of course. But Jesus knew that these grosser vices were not the deadliest. On all sides their evil is admitted, even by those who do them. There is little hypocrisy mingled with their practice. They are, therefore, easier to discern, easier to condemn, and easier to repent of than the subtler sins of the spirit. Hence, Jesus warned certain pious hypocrites, "The publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you."

It was these subtler sins of the spirit which Jesus as they remembered him counted the worst. These refined sins of the cultured stalk the gospel pages in vivid, but usually unheeded, warning.

There are the half-serious, to whom life is chiefly an opportunity for self-enjoyment. They spend their days for the most part in the lighter pleasures of eating, drinking, and making merry.

There are the half-hearted, who "say and do not." They never put their convictions into action. They aspire, but never seek to achieve.

There are the half-intelligent, who, as we have seen, know but do not think. They are knowing enough, but hopelessly thought-less.

There are the half-moral, who make their vows of "corban." By it they give material support to synagogue and

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temple, but dodge their financial obligations to needy relatives.

There are the half-religious, who are keen for conventional Sabbath observance, for fasting, washings, and meticulous tithings, but who leave "undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy."

These are the big sins, and they that do them are the big sinners. It is these refined forms of evil that aroused Jesus' hottest warnings. Compared with these, the immoral who waste themselves in riotous and vicious living have a large chance of salvation. It is these pious sinners who are in danger of final ruin. Faced with the supreme invitation, "Come, for all things are now ready," they are the kind who begin "with one consent to make excuses."

Such was the life-wide conception of salvation according to Jesus. Although this description does not present its cosmic implications as set forth in the previous chapter, it shows clearly how Jesus as they remembered him brought salvation to men. It also discloses how thoroughly he thought men needed saving. No part of a man's life could be ignored. Salvation must reach into its every phase. As their experience in him grew, his followers realized that he possessed the keys of salvation. "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!"

Jesus' greatest achievement, as they remembered him, was his revelation of God. As they saw it in retrospect,



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his teaching was more than good advice, his ethical principles more than moral precepts, and his life more than a good example. It was a demonstration of the presence and power of God.

Always he faced men with the living God. Those qualities of character in the children of God which he proclaimed in the Beatitudes were more than a description of human character as it ought to be. They were drawn largely from the qualities of the living God as he is. He is the gentle, the pure, the peacemaking. "Love your enemies," became under Jesus' exposition more than ethical duty. It was an exposure of the divine nature. The children of God are called upon to love their enemies "that ye may be sons of your Father," because God forgives his enemies. Such an impartial love is Godlike, for by so doing "ye, therefore, shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Those seemingly impossible demands, "give to him that asketh thee," and "turn to him the other cheek," derive their validity from the fact that thus God himself does. *He reacts that way!* Can a child of his, then, be regarded as like him, or as doing his will, who is content with being anything less? When Jesus called men to highest ethical living, he confronted them not only with duties, but with their heavenly Father, whose own love, mercy, and forgiveness were absolute for himself and his children.

This being ushered into the presence of God is as vivid in Jesus' admonitions to prayer as in his instructions con-

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cerning ethical conduct. "Our Father, who art in heaven," instantly puts the worshiper before God. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not . . . neither will your Father forgive." This is not a picture of a tit-for-tat God. If you do, I do; if you don't, I won't. Not that! Rather, the petitioner stands before the Forgiving God. If the Divine Forgiver is to forgive him, he must be open to receive that forgiving spirit. There Jesus leaves the petitioner, standing stark before God!

Likewise if one is worried over material possessions. At once Jesus brings him into the presence of the Eternal. "Consider the lilies of the field." "Behold the birds of the heaven." "Your heavenly Father feedeth them." "If God doth so clothe the grass of the field . . . shall he not much more clothe you?" "Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things." Jesus confronts the anxious—worried about food, troubled about clothes, and dismayed over the future—with the Providing God. "All these things shall be added unto you."

In the light of their later experience, it seemed to the earliest believers that in Jesus as they remembered him they had actually come face to face with the Most High. When they met Jesus they were meeting God. Not that they at first realized it. If there is any exact fact in the words reported by John, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," they distinctly had not recognized it when he walked with them. But as they later examined their memories of him, they were increasingly positive that in



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Jesus they had met the living God. God himself had stood before them in Jesus. Personality is revealed only in personality. His personality was the personality of God. In Jesus they saw the undimmed glory of the Father. *He made God visible.* "I and the Father are one."

These were the glorious achievements of Jesus as they remembered and came to interpret him. His majestic personality they could define only as the mighty presence of the infinite God. His fullness of life, flooding the farthest bounds of human endeavor, they experienced as the invading energies of the omnipotent God. His ceaseless efforts to save men, so universal in their principles and inclusive of all living, they identified as the active salvation of the holy God. His presence brought such an awareness of the all-pervading God that they were driven to the august conclusion: He was God "manifest in the flesh." His whole life and character they enshrined in one triumphant summary, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

## NOTES

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### I

On the surface it will appear as though the gospel materials, miracles, teachings, events, and even incidents in the Fourth Gospel have here been used indiscriminately, without regard for the findings of scholarship. Closer reading will show that this is only in appearance, and grows out of the fact that a *profound inner unity permeates the gospels*. It is one of their great underlying realities. Below all their variations, their portrait of Jesus is a unity. The Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount is deep of insight, epigrammatic in phrase, brilliant in illustration, and rich in understanding. So is the Jesus of the miracle of the infirm woman. The Jesus of the Bethany tomb and lake shore in John is, underneath, the Jesus of Mark, asking questions, full of mercy, eager to serve, and exacting staunchest loyalty. Whether this inner unity is due to the indelible coloration of the gospel material by the Early Church interpreters, as many scholars think, or to the ineradicable impress of Jesus' personality, as this writer firmly believes, is in dispute. As the gospels now stand, under all their colorations and variations there remains an *Unforgotten Figure*, who was essentially all this inner unity in these diverse elements reveals.



## *JESUS AS THEY REMEMBERED HIM*

### II

The use of this incident, so pointedly questioned by many scholars, raises the whole problem of authentic and unauthentic passages in the gospels. To the best of his ability, this writer has used only those passages more generally accepted by scholars as reliable. This is most difficult since these scholars vary widely as to just which gospel passages they deem authentic. What one scholar judges to be indisputably genuine, another equally careful student thinks is spurious. Important as this matter is, its final effect on any portrait of Jesus is far less startling than might at first be expected. The Jesus of the "colored" or "doubtful" parts is often precisely the Jesus of the "authentic" materials. The Jesus of the apocalyptic parable of the talents, with its glad invitation, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," is the same radiant Jesus of the prophetic word, "Can the sons of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?" This is a further demonstration of the profound inner unity of the gospels. Even so, every pain has been taken not to cite passages loosely or carelessly.

### III

Though the use of the gospel miracles in any accurate portrait of Jesus presents perplexing problems to the modern scholar, their inclusion or exclusion makes far less difference in the total picture of Jesus than at first might be supposed. The Jesus who healed the man with the withered hand, and the Jesus who rebuked the ardent Peter, is in both cases the Jesus of the flashing eye, abrupt manner, and quick, stern reproof. To omit or include, in a carefully weighed manner, Jesus' miracles has strikingly little effect on our final understanding of him.

## NOTES

### IV

The Fourth Gospel stands in a category by itself, apart from the three Synoptic Gospels. This is an axiom of all modern scholarship. However, it has long been recognized as being honeycombed with synoptic touches. The curing of the lame man at Bethesda's pool is thoroughly synoptic in its setting, method, and resulting controversy, if not in its appended teaching. Though no effort has been made in this book to elucidate the characteristic positions and teachings of the Fourth Gospel, this parallelism between John and the Synoptics has been rightfully laid under contribution.

### V

It may sometimes seem to the thoughtful reader as though some interpretations of certain gospel stories have had more read into them than the original gospel editors, or even Jesus himself, intended. While exercising due care, we have every right to state what we see in what was recorded. In the parable of the lost coin the gospel writers had no concern with Jesus' pity for poverty. That was not the parable's point as they understood it, nor as Jesus intended it. But had Jesus been obtuse to the tragic poverty his story involved, he could hardly have told it. In this cautious way we have full right to infer for ourselves all we justly can about Jesus from what they recorded about him.

### VI

The original Jesus as sharply distinguished from the exalted Christ of faith may seem to some to have been blurred. But no such clean-cut distinction is possible. An original Jesus



### *JESUS AS THEY REMEMBERED HIM*

wholly apart from the Christ of faith *never existed*. In a vital way every great leader is in some sense an object of faith. Men believe in something about him, and about something in him. These twin aspects can never be wholly separated. It is not by opposing the Jesus of Galilee to the Christ of faith, but by *balancing* them, that we shall discover the real Jesus. For the original Jesus as they remembered him was so mighty, even in his Palestinian days, that his disillusioned, fleeing disciples could credit the vast surprise of his resurrection. Only so great a Jesus of Nazareth can have been the actual Jesus. This was the true Jesus as they remembered him.